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ABSTRACT

This document, produced by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), is a handbook for administrators of community, junior, and specialized two-year colleges. This handbook is for the specific use of institutions under review, members of evaluation teams, and others who are concerned with good practice in associate degree-granting institutions. It begins with an introduction, which states that institutional accreditation by the ACCJC is a voluntary, nongovernmental process involving institutional self-study and professional peer review. The handbook is subsequently divided into four parts. Part 1 continues the introduction, with sections on the purpose of accreditation, standards and policies, accredited status, periodic review, candidate status, and review and appeal. Part 2 covers the standards for accreditation, which involve (1) institutional mission; (2) institutional integrity; (3) institutional effectiveness; (4) educational programs; (5) student support and development; (6) information and learning resources; (7) faculty and staff; (8) physical resources; (9) financial resources; and (10) governance and administration. Part 3 includes sections on testimonial policies, national policies, and operational policies. Finally, Part 4 is an appendix, which includes information on accreditation agencies and related organizations and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges constitution. (ND)

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HANDBOOK OF ACCREDITATION AND POLICY MANUAL

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Standards of Accreditation and Commission Handbook are refined over time and informed by the experience of hundreds of professionals who volunteer their time, their labors, and their wisdom to the work of the Commission. Institutional trustees, presidents, administrators, faculty members, staff, and students contribute their perspective through participation on evaluation teams, working on institutional self studies, serving on Commission Task Groups, and reviewing Commission papers.

A series of Task Groups organized around each of the major standards, augmented by special working groups drawn from the private institutions and from the institutional research community provided advice throughout the development period. In addition, presentations at conferences, workshops with system and institutional representatives, and discussions with Accreditation Liaison Officers provided more comment. Organizations and associations were invited to provide comment, and they responded with valuable suggestions.

The development of this Handbook was further enhanced by the work of a national committee of regional accreditation Associate Directors. This committee reviewed all current regional accreditation eligibility requirements and threshold accreditation standards. The Commission adopted and incorporated much of the work of this group into the 1996 Standards of Accreditation.

The Commission Editorial Board, chaired first by Robert D. Jensen and then by Constance M. Carroll, coordinated the development of the 1996 Standards of Accreditation. Members of that Board were Commissioners Barbara Beno, Carmen Maldonado Decker, J. Robert Evans, Celina Sau Lin Ing, and Bruce Smith. Commission Consultant Frances Conn was a constant source of substantive insight and editorial refinement. Associate Director Judith Watkins served as overall project coordinator and editor of the Handbook. Sue Lundquist and Mary Ann Hilmes prepared and proofread the material for publication.

PART I

INTRODUCTION TO THE 1996 EDITION

This handbook is intended for members of the community of community, junior, and specialized two year colleges. It is for the use of institutions under review, members of evaluation teams, and others who are concerned with good practice in associate degree- granting institutions.

Institutional accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) is a voluntary, nongovernmental process involving institutional self study and professional peer review. Standards for accreditation represent generally- accepted definitions of good practice in education. Policies, procedures, and standards have been adopted and published by ACCJC after development by representatives of accredited institutions and review by accreditation liaison officers and institutional leaders.

New editions are published periodically as the Commission conducts systematic reviews of its standards, policies, and practices. Comments and suggestions should be submitted to the ACCJC Executive Director or any member of the Commission. Standards are under continuous review by ACCJC member institutions and the Commission.

This document is to be used in conjunction with companion volumes. The Guide to Institutional Self Study and Reports to the Commission is a reference book which includes instructions for completion and submission of reports to the Commission. The Handbook for Evaluators assists visiting teams in conducting on-site evaluations and preparing evaluation reports to the Commission. The Eligibility Brochure: Requirements for Accreditation spells out the core characteristics of an accreditable institution and the Commission's expectations of institutions to be considered for membership.

The Commission is recognized by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), a nongovernmental agency that recognizes postsecondary accrediting bodies in the United States. It is also recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

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WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is one of the six regional accrediting associations covering the United States whose purpose is continual improvement of education and cooperation among educational institutions and agencies. WASC was formed on July 1, 1962 to evaluate and accredit schools, colleges, and universities in California, Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau. WASC functions through a board of directors and three accrediting commissions: the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, and the Accrediting Commission for Schools. The board of directors consists of nine members, each accrediting commission electing three members.

Each commission, with the involvement of all participating institutions, develops its own standards, procedures, and fiscal policies under the authority and subject to the approval of the WASC board of directors. The accreditation actions of each commission are certified by the board of directors of WASC. Accreditation ceases whenever an institution requests in writing that its accreditation be terminated, when the Commission formally acts to terminate accreditation, or when an institution fails to pay its annual fees.

THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES)

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) accredits institutions in the WASC service area offering the undergraduate curriculum at less that the baccalaureate level. The ACCJC accredits only institutions that offer an associate's degree. Member institutions of the ACCJC include public community colleges, private non-profit colleges, private proprietary colleges, and religion-based colleges.

The Commission is composed of nineteen individuals selected from among the membership institutions and persons representing the public interest in the region. The Commissioners serve three-year terms, renewable for one term. The Commission develops and approves Accreditation Standards, all policies related to accreditation and the functioning of the Commission office, and makes decisions regarding the accredited status of institutions.

Purposes of Accreditation

Voluntary nongovernmental institutional accreditation as practiced by the Commission and the other regional commissions is a unique characteristic of American education. No institution in the United States is required to seek accreditation; however, because of the recognized benefits, most of the eligible institutions in this and other regions have sought to become accredited. In many other countries the maintenance of educational standards is a governmental function.

While the Commission works to establish minimum standards of quality for institutions, its primary focus is to foster educational excellence. Each institution has the responsibility of defining its mission and standards of excellence for itself, and presenting evidence that it is accomplishing its mission and providing excellent education.

The Commission evaluates the institution's performance against the Standards of Accreditation and in the context of the institution's own mission. The Commission tries to deal with institutional differences in ways that protect both general standards of excellence and individualized educational philosophy and practice.

Where an institution provides programs not commonly offered by accredited institutions of higher education in the United States, the institution bears the burden of demonstrating that the subject matter offered is appropriate to higher education, is academic in quality and rigor, and can be reviewed by peers from accredited institutions.

The Commission accredits institutions, not individual programs. Therefore, in addition to assessing academic quality, integrity, and effectiveness, the Commission emphasizes structures, processes, and resources. In order to assist institutions in determining their educational effectiveness, the Commission has recognized five major purposes of accreditation:

1. To assure the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an institution has clearly defined objectives appropriate to postsecondary education, has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected, appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantially, is so organized, staffed and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so, and meets Commission standards.

2. To encourage institutional development and improvement through self study and periodic evaluation by qualified peer professionals.

3. To develop and use standards to assess and enhance educational quality and institutional performance, and to validate these standards by ongoing research.

4. To promote interchange of ideas among public and independent institutions through peer review.

5. To protect institutions against encroachments which might jeopardize their educational effectiveness or academic freedom.

Standards and Policies

Accreditation is a continuing process, the heart of which lies in periodic self-appraisal by each institution. In its initial application for candidacy or accreditation, and in preparation for each subsequent visit, every institution prepares an extensive report with primary emphasis on self-analysis and evaluation. Between scheduled visits, each institution addresses visiting team recommendations and submits Annual Reports.

As a result of extensive experience and research, the Commission has determined that there are certain basic characteristics of quality required of all institutions of higher education. These Commission standards, policies, and procedures are periodically reviewed and revised. Revisions are made as needed, based on research, the experience of the Commission and visiting teams, and comments of institutional representatives.

The College-Commission Relationship

In carrying out its functions, the Commission has established a "Code of good Practice," both for its relations with the institutions it serves and with regard to its internal organization and procedures. The full text of this policy is to be found on pages 92-94.

Every institution seeking recognition by the Commission is expected to abide by the standards and policies of the Commission as stated in this Handbook and as may be developed in the future. As knowledge increases and the needs of society change, institutions are continually evolving in order to serve their students and community better. Consequently, the Commission continually reviews the role and validity of its standards and engages in widespread consultation with the accredited institutions in the region in order to incorporate their suggestions and receive their approval. The Commission conducts research to assess the validity, reliability, and usefulness of its standards and procedures as aids to institutional improvement.

The effectiveness of self-regulatory accreditation, however, depends upon the institution's acceptance of specific responsibilities, including complying with all of the standards and abiding by the Commission's policies, procedures, and decisions. There must be institutional commitment to and involvement in the accreditation process. The process assumes that each institution has the responsibility to accept an honest and forthright assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses. As a consequence, a comprehensive self study report and peer evaluation are required. Only in this way will the validity and vitality of the accreditation process be ensured.

In its relations with the institutions it serves, the Commission is committed to:

1. Appraise institutions in terms of their own stated purposes within the context of Commission standards and interpret standards in ways that are relevant to the character of the particular institution, respecting institutional integrity and diversity.

2. Emphasize the value and importance of institutional self study including systematic assessment of institutional effectiveness.

3. Assist and stimulate improvement in the educational effectiveness of the institution.

4. Conduct evaluation visits by experienced and qualified peers under conditions which, insofar as reasonably possible, ensure impartial and objective judgment, avoiding conflict of interest.

5. Include on evaluation teams representation from other institutions of similar purpose and academic programs.

6. Provide institutions an opportunity to object, for cause, to individual members assigned to the team designated to visit the institution, with special concern for possible conflict of interest.

7. Require each evaluation team chair to arrange consultation during the visit with administration, faculty, students, and trustees and to include during

comprehensive visits a publicized opportunity for an open hearing.

8. Provide opportunity for the institution to respond in writing to the team report before it is completed and to appear before the Commission when the report is considered.

9. Provide opportunity for institutional representatives and the general public to attend portions of Commission meetings devoted to policies and other nonconfidential matters. See policy on APublic Access,@ page 90.

10. Encourage widespread discussion and serious consideration of major team recommendations.

11. Request a written response from an institution or refer a matter to the next evaluation team when the Commission's attention is drawn to the possibility that an institution may be in violation of Commission standards or policies. A special interim visit focused on specified concerns may be scheduled by the Commission.

12. Make an initial visit for candidacy or accreditation to an institution only on the written request of the chief executive officer of the institution.

13. Revisit an institution consistent with Commission policies and periodic evaluation procedures following due notice to the institution.

14. Permit withdrawal of a request for initial candidacy or initial accreditation at any time (even after evaluation) prior to final action by the Commission.

15. Revoke accreditation or candidacy only after advanced written notice.

16. Encourage continuing communication between the Commission and institutions through the liaison officer position in each institution. See policy on Accreditation Liaison Officer.

Accredited Status

The status of accreditation indicates that an institution has met Commission standards.

In meeting these standards the institution has:

1. Completed a period of intensive and comprehensive self study followed by an on-site evaluation of institutional performance, demonstrating that it meets Commission standards.

2. Demonstrated that it operates at a satisfactory level of quality in its educational programs consistent with its stated purposes and consistent with Commission standards.

3. Demonstrated the availability of sufficient resources to support existing and planned activities at a satisfactory level of quality and offered reasonable

grounds for belief that there will continue to be adequate resources in the future.

4. Committed itself to institutional improvement, periodic self-evaluation, and continuing compliance with all Commission standards, policies, procedures, and decisions.

Periodic Review

Accreditation is attained by the process of evaluation of an entire institution and continues until formally withdrawn. It is subject, however, to periodic review and to conditions as determined by the Commission. Every accredited institution files an annual report and undergoes a comprehensive self study and evaluation at least every six years. A Midterm Report describing progress in responding to team recommendations is submitted in the third year following the evaluation visit. The Commission may request special interim reports and visits to assure progress in addressing specified issues of concern.

If an institution undergoes significant change or if its educational effectiveness is questioned, the Commission reserves the right to review that institution's accreditation without regard to any previously indicated time pattern.

As a voluntary, nongovernmental agency, the Commission is not obligated to exercise the regulatory control of state and federal governments, or to apply their mandates regarding collective bargaining, affirmative action, health and safety regulations, and the like. Furthermore, the Commission does not enforce the standards of specialized accrediting agencies or other nongovernmental organizations, or the laws and regulations of state agencies, although institutions may wish to review the publications of such other agencies as part of the self study process. The Commission has its own standards and expects that institutions and teams will apply them with integrity, imagination, and an attitude of humane concern for students and the public interest.

When an institution is granted accreditation, the following shall appear in all appropriate publications:

> (Name of institution) is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the U.S. Department of Education.

Candidate Status

Candidate for Accreditation status offers both new and established institutions the opportunity to establish a publicly recognized relationship with a regional accrediting agency. It is a pre-accreditation status, initially awarded for two years. Candidacy indicates that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation. Candidacy is a period in which the institution undertakes the necessary steps to reach demonstrable compliance with Commission standards. Candidate status may not exceed four years.

An institution granted candidacy must use the following statement if it wishes to describe that status publicly:

> (Name of institution) is a candidate for accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the U.S. Department of Education.
>
> Candidate for Accreditation is a status of preliminary affiliation with the Commission initially awarded for two years. The Commission may renew candidate status for an additional two years, grant initial accreditation following institutional self study and on-site evaluation visit, or terminate candidacy. Candidacy may not exceed four years. Candidacy is not accreditation and does not assure eventual accreditation.

Review and Appeal

Institutions whose applications for candidacy, renewal of candidacy, accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation are denied or whose candidacy or accreditation is terminated by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges may request a review of the Commission's decision. Such a review must be requested prior to a filing of an appeal by the institution to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The policies and procedures which govern the conduct of the Commission's review are found in the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Constitution.

An institution which, after availing itself of the review procedure of the Commission, still believes itself aggrieved by the Commission's denial or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation may appeal such action within thirty days of receipt of notice thereof, to the President of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The WASC President shall arrange a hearing for representatives of the institution before the Association's Hearing Board, established for this purpose, as prescribed in Article VI of the Constitution of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

Alteration of Evaluation Schedule

An institution may petition the Accrediting Commission for alteration of its evaluation schedule. A written request submitted to the Executive Director will be considered by the Commission if the request is based on:

1. A plan to coordinate evaluation of institutions in a system.
2. Disaster, such as fire, flood, or earthquake that impedes the normal conduct of institutional business for an extended period of time.
3. Severe and unusual circumstances that unavoidably disrupt the self study process or scheduled team visit.
4. Substantive changes in the mission or status of the institution.

ELIGIBILITY FOR ACCREDITATION

Eligible institutions offering one or more programs of two academic years leading to the Associate Degree, located in the states of Hawaii and California, the territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands may apply to the Commission for candidacy.

Prior to making a formal application, an institution wishing to become a Candidate for Accreditation must begin by assessing itself in relation to the basic criteria for institutional eligibility, stated below. The standards of accreditation and Commission policies should also be reviewed as they will provide a clear statement of ultimate Commission expectations of institutional performance and quality and give further definition to the eligibility criteria. The eligibility process is designed to screen institutions prior to a period of formal and extensive institutional self study so that only institutions which meet the basic criteria for eligibility may proceed.

The Commission uses the same self study and site visit process for both candidacy and accreditation applications. The results of a candidacy or initial accreditation visit could be denial, candidacy, or accreditation. Clearly, the history of the applicant institution will have great bearing on the Commission's decision.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION

(Adopted June, 1995; Revised January, 1996)

Compliance with the requirements is expected to be continuous and will be validated periodically, normally as part of every institutional self study and comprehensive evaluation. Institutions are expected to include in their self study reports information demonstrating that they continue to meet the eligibility requirements.

AUTHORITY

1. The institution is authorized to operate as an educational institution and to award degrees by an appropriate governmental organization or agency as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates.

   In California, 94310.3A (or subsequent statute) approval by the California Council for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education is required for private institutions. The institution shall submit a copy of its articles of incorporation.

MISSION

2. The institution's educational mission is clearly defined, adopted, and published by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization and is appropriate to a degree granting institution of higher education and the constituency it seeks to serve.

GOVERNING BOARD

3. The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out. Its membership is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities.

   The governing board is an independent policy-making body, capable of reflecting constituent and public interest in board activities and decisions. A majority of the board members have no employment, family, or personal financial interest in the institution.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

4. The institution has a chief executive officer who is appointed by the governing board and whose primary responsibility is to the institution.

ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

5. The institution has sufficient staff with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose.

OPERATIONAL STATUS

6. The institution is operational with students actively pursuing its degree programs.

DEGREES

7. A substantial portion of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and a significant proportion of its students are enrolled in them.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

8. The institution's principal degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education field(s) of study, are of sufficient content and length, and are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered. At least one degree program must be of two academic years in length.

ACADEMIC CREDIT

9. The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. Public institutions governed by statutory or system regulatory requirements should provide appropriate information regarding the award of academic credit.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

10. The institution defines and publishes for each program the program's educational objectives for students.

GENERAL EDUCATION

11. The institution defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry. The general education component should include demonstrated competence in writing and computational skills and an introduction to some of the major areas of knowledge. Degree credit for general education programs should be consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education.

FACULTY

12. The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution and sufficient in size and experience to support all of the institution's educational programs. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must exist.

STUDENT SERVICES

13. The institution provides for all of its students appropriate student services and development programs consistent with student characteristics and its institutional mission.

ADMISSIONS

14. The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

15. The institution owns or otherwise provides specific long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and all of its educational programs.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

16. The institution documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support its mission and educational programs and to assure financial stability.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

17. The institution regularly undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. The institution shall submit a copy of the current budget and a copy of the current audited financial statement prepared by an outside certified public accountant who has no other relationship to the institution. The audit must be certified and any exceptions explained. It is recommended that the auditor employ as a guide Audits of Colleges and Universities, published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND EVALUATION

18. The institution provides evidence of basic planning for the development of the institution, planning which identifies and integrates plans for academic personnel, learning resources, facilities, and financial development, as well as procedures for program review and institutional improvement.

    The institution engages in systematically evaluating how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning and documentation of institutional effectiveness.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

19. The institution publishes in its catalog or other appropriate places accurate and current information that describes its purposes and objectives, admission requirements and procedures, rules and regulations directly affecting students, programs and courses, degrees offered and the degree requirements, costs and refund policies, grievance procedures, academic credentials of faculty and administrators, and other items relative to attending the institution and withdrawing from it.

RELATIONS WITH THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION

20. The governing board provides assurance that the institution adheres to the eligibility requirements and accreditation standards and policies of the Commission, describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accredited status, and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities.

DOCUMENTATION FOR ELIGIBILITY APPLICATIONS

The Commission recognizes that not every institution begins the process of affiliation from the same place. A public institution which has existed as a branch or center of an established college will be very different from a new private college, and both will be different from an established specialized institution. The documents listed below are intended to be guidelines indicating Commission expectations for colleges preparing for an Eligibility Review. It is in the college's best interest to provide as much relevant information as possible to assist staff review and the Commission decision making process.

1. AUTHORITY

   - Degree granting approval statement or certificate from appropriate body.
   - Articles of incorporation (private institutions).

2. MISSION

   - Copy of mission statement as it appears in a published catalog or other public document.
   - Minutes of governing board meeting where mission statement was adopted.

3. GOVERNING BOARD

   - Biographical information on the governing board members.
   - Copy of governing board by-laws and statement of board responsibilities.
   - Certification that the board does not have a majority of persons with employment, family, or personal interest in the institution signed by chief executive officer and governing board chair (private institutions).

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

   - Name, address, and biographical information on chief executive officer.
   - Certification of CEO's primary responsibility to the institution signed by chief executive officer and governing board chair.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

   - Table of organization, including names of those in positions.
   - Names and biographical information on administrative staff.

6. OPERATIONAL STATUS

   - Enrollment history of the institution.
   - Enrollments in institutional degree programs by year or cohort, including degrees awarded.
   - Current schedule of classes.

7. DEGREES

- List of degrees, course credit requirements, and length of study for each degree program, including documentation of at least one degree program of two academic years.
- Catalog designation of college level courses for which degree credit is granted.

8. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- Names of degrees which reflect the mission of the institution.
- Documentation from catalog or other public document which describes the courses, units, and curricular sequence of the educational programs.

9. ACADEMIC CREDIT

- Institutional policies on transfer and award of credit.
- Formulae used by the institution to calculate values of academic credit.

10. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Catalog statements which establish educational objectives for programs.
- Outcomes data from educational program reviews.
- Graduation history.

11. GENERAL EDUCATION

- List of general education courses, including catalog descriptions.
- Course outlines for language and quantitative reasoning courses.
- Documentation of higher education rigor and quality.

12. FACULTY

- Full time and part time faculty roster, including degrees and experience.
- Faculty responsibilities statement.
- Current schedule of classes identifying responsible faculty.

13. STUDENT SERVICES

- Demographic characteristics of students.
- List of student services provided which reflects the mission of the institution.

14. ADMISSIONS

- Copy of admissions policy from a published statement.
- Copy of enrollment application.
- Statement of student qualifications for admission.

15. INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

- Profile of holdings and resources.
- Copies of agreements for access to external resources.

16. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- Past, current, and proposed budgets and financial statements.
- Documentation of any external foundation or other funding support.
- Student loan default rates and relevant USDE reports, if a participant.
- Documentation of funding base.

17. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

- Past, current, and proposed budgets.
- Financial aid program reviews/audits, if a participant.
- Certified independent audit, including management letter.

18. INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND EVALUATION

- Most recent educational, fiscal, and facilities plans.
- Most recent institutional evaluations of student assessment and outcomes systems.

19. PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

- Catalog or other public document which serves that purpose.
- Recent print or other media advertisements.
- Policies regarding public disclosure.

20. RELATIONS WITH THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION

- Copy of policy adopted and published by the governing board assuring compliance with this criterion.
- List of other accreditation held by the institution.
- Copy of directory pages which describe the institution's representation by those accrediting bodies.

PART II

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

The standards describe good practice in community and junior college education. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges has established its standards based on experience, research, and extensive consultation with member institutions. Commission standards and policies are periodically reviewed and revised. Revisions are made as needed and are based on research, the experience of the Commission and visiting teams, and comments of institutional representatives.

The Commission articulated five assumptions which undergird the standards. We encourage institutions to remember these overarching goals as they interpret and use the standards in light of individual mission and circumstance.

1. The diversity of the whole range of institutions included in the region must be respected and accommodated, recognizing that good practice may be manifest in a wide range of practices and settings.

2. The standards focus on outcomes and accomplishments, embracing a model of accreditation which requires assessment of resources, processes, and outcomes at the institutional level.

3. The standards are statements of good practice in higher education and avoid language of compliance which might be linked to one system or set of statutes or regulations within the region.

4. The standards strive toward economy and clarity and avoid redundancy and ambiguity.

5. The standards recognize that the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges is itself a part of a larger accrediting community which includes the other Commissions in the region, other regional institutional accreditors, and governmental and non-governmental agencies.

The accreditation standards cover ten areas, each of which is designated as a major standard. The scope of each standards is described in a headnote. It is followed by numbered and lettered subsections which provide further definition to the standard. these numbered subsections identify major components of the standard, but they are not designed to cover every facet of the standard. Institutions are expected to address each of the components set forth, and they are encouraged to include additional components if doing so would provide greater depth or more particular applicability to the individual institution.

In preparing its self study, an institution is expected to present appropriate documentation to support its description and analysis of programs and services and evidence that it meets or exceeds the requirements for accreditation.

The Guide to Self Study provides complete discussion of the Commission's expectations concerning evidence and documentation to be presented. It contains information, suggestions, and examples useful in conducting the institutional self study and preparing the accreditation report.

STANDARD ONE: INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution, its educational purposes, its students, and its place in the higher education community.

1. The institution has a statement of mission, adopted by the governing board, which identifies the broad-based educational purposes it seeks to achieve.

2. The mission statement defines the students the institution intends to serve as well as the parameters under which programs can be offered and resources allocated.

3. Institutional planning and decision making are guided by the mission statement.

4. The institution evaluates and revises its mission statement on a regular basis.

STANDARD TWO: INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

The institution subscribes to, advocates, and demonstrates honesty and truthfulness in representations to its constituencies and the public; in pursuit of truth and the dissemination of knowledge; in its treatment of and respect for administration, faculty, staff, and students; in the management of its affairs and in relationships with its accreditation association and other external agencies.

1. The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently to its constituencies, the public, and prospective students through its catalogues, publications, and statements, including those presented in electronic formats. Precise, accurate, and current information is provided in the catalog concerning (a) educational purposes; (b) degrees, curricular offerings, educational resources, and course offerings; (c) student fees and other financial obligations, student financial aid, and fee refund policies; (d) requirements for admission and for achievement of degrees, including the academic calendar and information regarding program length; and (e) the names of administrators, faculty, and governing board.

2. The institution has a readily available governing board-adopted policy protecting academic freedom and responsibility which states the institutional commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and fosters the integrity of the teaching-learning process.

3. Faculty and other college staff distinguish between personal conviction and proven conclusions and present relevant data fairly and objectively to students and others.

4. Institutions which strive to instill specific beliefs or world views or to require codes of conduct of faculty, administrative and support staff, or students give clear prior notice of such policies.

5. The institution provides faculty and students with clear expectations concerning the principles of academic honesty and the sanctions for violation.

6. The institution demonstrates through policies and practices an appropriate understanding of and concern for issues of equity and diversity.

7. The institution demonstrates honesty and integrity in its athletic programs.

8. The institution demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with the Commission and agrees to comply with Commission standards, policies, guidelines, public disclosure, and self study requirements.

9. The institution regularly evaluates and revises institutional policies, practices, and publications to ensure integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.

STANDARD THREE: INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The institution, appropriate to its mission and purposes as a higher education institution, develops and implements a broad-based and integrated system of research, evaluation, and planning to assess institutional effectiveness and uses the results for institutional improvement. The institution identifies institutional outcomes which can be validated by objective evidence.

A. Institutional Research and Evaluation

A.1 Institutional research is integrated with and supportive of institutional planning and evaluation.

A.2 The institution provides the necessary resources for effective research and evaluation.

A.3 The institution has developed and implemented the means for evaluating how well, and in what ways, it accomplishes its mission and purposes.

A.4 The institution provides evidence that its program evaluations lead to improvement of programs and services.

B. Institutional Planning

B.1 The institution defines and publishes its planning processes and involves appropriate segments of the college community in the development of institutional plans.

B.2 The institution defines and integrates its evaluation and planning processes to identify priorities for improvement.

B.3 The institution engages in systematic and integrated educational, financial, physical, and human resources planning and implements changes to improve programs and services.

C. Institutional Outcomes Assessment

C.1 The institution specifies intended institutional outcomes and has clear documentation of their achievement.

C.2 The institution uses information from its evaluation and planning activities to communicate matters of quality assurance to the public.

C.3 The institution systematically reviews and modifies, as appropriate, its institutional research efforts, evaluation processes, institutional plans, and planning processes to determine their ongoing utility for assessing institutional effectiveness.

STANDARD FOUR: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The institution offers collegiate level programs in recognized fields of study that culminate in identified student competencies leading to degrees and certificates. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all educational activities offered in the name of the institution, regardless of where or how presented, or by whom taught.

A. General Provisions

A.1 The institution seeks to meet the varied educational needs of its students through programs consistent with its institutional mission and purposes and the demographics and economics of its community.

A.2 Programs and courses leading to degrees are offered in a manner which provides students the opportunity to complete the program as announced, within a reasonable time.

A.3 When programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption.

A.4 The institution provides sufficient human, financial, and physical (including technological) resources to support its educational programs and to facilitate achievement of the goals and objectives of those programs regardless of the service location or instructional delivery method.

A.5 The institution designs and maintains academic advising programs to meet student needs for information and advice and adequately informs and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function.

B. Degree and Certificate Programs

B.1 The institution demonstrates that its degrees and programs, wherever and however offered, support the mission of the institution. Degree and certificate programs have a coherent design and are characterized by appropriate length, breadth, depth, sequencing of courses, synthesis of learning, and use of information and learning resources.

B.2 The institution identifies its degrees and certificates in ways which are consistent with the program content, degree objectives, and student mastery of knowledge and skills including, where appropriate, career preparation and competencies.

B.3 The institution identifies and makes public expected learning outcomes for its degree and certificate programs. Students completing programs demonstrate achievement of those stated learning outcomes.

B.4 All degree programs are designed to provide students a significant introduction to the broad areas of knowledge, their theories and methods of inquiry, and focused study in at least one area of inquiry or established interdisciplinary core.

B.5 Students completing degree programs demonstrate competence in the use of language and computation.

B.6 The institution documents the technical and professional competence of students completing its vocational and occupational programs.

C. General Education

C.1 The institution requires of all degree programs a component of general education that is published in clear and complete terms in its general catalog.

C.2 The general education component is based on a philosophy and rationale that are clearly stated. Criteria are provided by which the appropriateness of each course in the general education component is determined.

C.3 The general education program introduces the content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge: the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. The general education program provides the opportunity for students to develop the intellectual skills, information technology facility, affective and creative capabilities, social attitudes, and an appreciation for cultural diversity that will make them effective learners and citizens.

C.4 Students completing the institution's general education program demonstrate competence in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and critical analysis/logical thinking.

D. Curriculum and Instruction

D.1 The institution has clearly defined processes for establishing and evaluating all of its educational programs. These processes recognize the central role of faculty in developing, implementing, and evaluating the educational programs. Program evaluations are integrated into overall institutional evaluation and planning and are conducted on a regular basis.

D.2 The institution ensures the quality of instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness of all of its courses and programs regardless of service location or instructional delivery method.

D.3 The evaluation of student learning and the award of credit are based upon clearly stated and published criteria. Credit awarded is consistent with student learning and is based upon generally accepted norms or equivalencies.

D.4 The institution has clearly stated transfer of credit policies. In accepting transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements, the institution certifies that the credits accepted, including those for general education, achieve educational objectives comparable to its own courses. Where patterns of transfer between institutions are established, efforts are undertaken to formulate articulation agreements.

D.5 The institution utilizes a range of delivery systems and modes of instruction compatible with the objectives of the curriculum and appropriate to the needs of its students.

D.6 The institution provides evidence that all courses and programs – both credit and non-credit – whether conducted on or off-campus by traditional or non-traditional delivery systems, are designed, approved, administered, and periodically evaluated under established institutional procedures. This provision applies to continuing and community education, contract and other special programs conducted in the name of the institution.

D.7 Institutions offering curricula through electronic delivery systems operate in conformity with applicable Commission policies and statements on "Principles of Good Practice in Distance Education."

D.8 Institutions offering curricula in foreign locations to students other than U.S. nationals operate in conformity with applicable Commission policies and guidelines.

STANDARD FIVE: STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The institution recruits and admits students appropriate to its programs. It identifies and serves the diverse needs of its students with educational programs and learning support services, and it fosters a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, and success.

1. The institution publishes admissions policies consistent with its mission and appropriate to its programs and follows practices that are consistent with those policies.

2. The institution provides to all prospective and currently enrolled students current and accurate information about its programs, admissions policies and graduation requirements, social and academic policies, refund policies, student conduct standards, and complaint and grievance procedures.

3. The institution identifies the educational support needs of its student population and provides appropriate services and programs to address those needs.

4. The institution involves students, as appropriate, in planning and evaluating student support and development services.

5. Admissions and assessment instruments and placement practices are designed to minimize test and other bias and are regularly evaluated to assure effectiveness.

6. The institution provides appropriate, comprehensive, reliable, and accessible services to its students regardless of service location or delivery method.

7. The institution, in keeping with its mission, creates and maintains a campus climate which serves and supports its diverse student population.

8. The institution supports a co-curricular environment that fosters intellectual, ethical, and personal development for all of its students and encourages personal and civic responsibility.

9. Student records are maintained permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained.

10. The institution systematically evaluates the appropriateness, adequacy, and effectiveness of its student services and uses the results of the evaluation as a basis for improvement.

STANDARD SIX: INFORMATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Information and learning resources and services are sufficient in quality, depth, diversity, and currentness to support the institution=s intellectual and cultural activities and programs in whatever format and wherever they are offered. The institution provides training so that information and learning resources may be used effectively and efficiently.

1. Information and learning resources, and any equipment needed to access the holdings of libraries, media centers, computer centers, databases and other repositories are sufficient to support the courses, programs, and degrees wherever offered.

2. Appropriate educational equipment and materials are selected, acquired,

organized, and maintained to help fulfill the institution=s purposes and support the educational program. Institutional policies and procedures ensure faculty involvement.

3. Information and learning resources are readily accessible to students, faculty, and administrators.

4. The institution has professionally qualified staff to provide appropriate support to users of information and learning resources, including training in the effective application of information technology to student learning.

5. The institution provides sufficient and consistent financial support for the effective maintenance, security, and improvement of its information and learning resources.

6. When the institution relies on other institutions or other sources for information and learning resources to support its educational programs, it documents that formal agreements exist and that such resources and services are adequate, easily accessible, and utilized.

7. The institution plans for and systematically evaluates the adequacy and effectiveness of its learning and information resources and services and makes appropriate changes as necessary.

STANDARD SEVEN: FACULTY AND STAFF

The institution has sufficient qualified full-time and part-time faculty and staff to support its educational programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds by making positive efforts to foster such diversity.

A. Qualifications and Selection

A.1 The institution has sufficient faculty and staff who are qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to support its programs and services.

A.2 Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selecting all personnel are clearly stated, public, directly related to institutional objectives, and accurately reflect job responsibilities.

A.3 Criteria for selecting faculty include knowledge of the subject matter or service to be performed, effective teaching, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution.

A.4 Degrees held by faculty and administrators are listed in the institution's primary catalog. All U.S. degrees are from institutions accredited by recognized accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.

B. Evaluation

B.1 The evaluation of each category of staff is systematic and conducted at stated intervals. The follow-up of evaluations is formal and timely.

B.2 Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness and encourage improvement.

B.3 Criteria for evaluation of faculty include teaching effectiveness, scholarship or other activities appropriate to the area of expertise, and participation in institutional service or other institutional responsibilities.

C. Staff Development

C.1 The institution provides appropriate opportunities to all categories of staff for continued professional development, consistent with the institutional mission.

C.2 Planning and evaluation of staff development programs include the participation of staff who participate in, or are affected by, the programs.

D. General Personnel Provisions

D.1 The institution has and adheres to written policies ensuring fairness in all employment procedures.

D.2 The institution regularly assesses and reports its achievement of its employment equity objectives, consistent with the institutional mission.

D.3 Personnel policies and procedures affecting all categories of staff are systematically developed, clear, equitably administered, and available for information and review.

D.4 The institution makes provision for the security and confidentiality of personnel records. Personnel records are private, accurate, complete, and permanent.

STANDARD EIGHT: PHYSICAL RESOURCES

The institution has sufficient and appropriate physical resources to support its purposes and goals.

1. The institution ensures that adequate physical resources are provided to support its educational programs and services wherever and however they are offered.

2. The management, maintenance, and operation of physical facilities ensure effective utilization and continuing quality necessary to support the programs and services of the institution.

3. Physical facilities at all site locations where courses, programs, and services are offered are constructed and maintained in accordance with the institution's obligation to ensure access, safety, security, and a healthful environment.

4. Selection, maintenance, inventory and replacement of equipment are conducted

systematically to support the educational programs and services of the institution.

5. Physical resource planning and evaluation support institutional goals and are linked to other institutional planning and evaluation efforts, including district or system planning and utilization where appropriate.

STANDARD NINE: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The institution has adequate financial resources to achieve, maintain, and enhance its programs and services. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of financial viability and institutional improvement. The institution manages its financial affairs with integrity, consistent with its educational objectives.

A. Financial Planning

A.1 Financial planning supports institutional goals and is linked to other institutional planning efforts.

A.2 Annual and long-range financial planning reflects realistic assessments of resource availability and expenditure requirements. In those institutions which set tuition rates, and which receive a majority of funding from student fees and tuition, charges are reasonable in light of the operating costs, services to be rendered, equipment, and learning resources to be supplied.

A.3 Annual and long-range capital plans support educational objectives and relate to the plan for physical facilities.

A.4 Institutional guidelines and processes for financial planning and budget development are clearly defined and followed.

A.5 Administrators, faculty, and support staff have appropriate opportunities to participate in the development of financial plans and budgets.

B. Financial Management

B.1 The financial management system creates appropriate control mechanisms and provides dependable and timely information for sound financial decision-making.

B.2 Financial documents, including the budget and independent audit, reflect appropriate allocation and use of financial resources to support institutional programs and services. Institutional responses to external audit findings are comprehensive and timely.

B.3 The institution practices effective oversight of finances, including management of financial aid, externally-funded programs, contractual relationships, auxiliary organizations or foundations, and institutional investments.

B.4 Auxiliary activities and fund raising efforts support the programs and services of the institution, are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution, and are conducted with integrity.

B.5 Contractual agreements with external entities are governed by institutional policies and contain appropriate provisions to maintain the integrity of the institution.

B.6 Financial management is regularly evaluated and the results are used to improve the financial management system.

C. Financial Stability

C.1 Future obligations are clearly identified and plans exist for payment.

C.2 The institution has policies for appropriate risk management.

C.3 Cash flow arrangements or reserves are sufficient to maintain stability.

C.4 The institution has a plan for responding to financial emergencies or unforeseen occurrences.

STANDARD TEN: GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The institution has a governing board responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution. The institution has an administrative staff of appropriate size to enable the institution to achieve its goals and is organized to provide appropriate administrative services. Governance structures and systems ensure appropriate roles for the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students, and facilitate effective communication among the institution=s constituencies.

A. Governing Board

A.1 The governing board is an independent policy-making board capable of reflecting the public interest in board activities and decisions. It has a mechanism for providing for continuity of board membership and staggered terms of office.

A.2 The governing board ensures that the educational program is of high quality, is responsible for overseeing the financial health and integrity of the institution, and confirms that institutional practices are consistent with the board-approved institutional mission statement and policies.

A.3 The governing board establishes broad institutional policies and appropriately delegates responsibility to implement these policies. The governing board regularly evaluates its policies and practices and revises them as necessary.

A.4 In keeping with its mission, the governing board selects and evaluates the chief executive officer and confirms the appointment of other major academic and administrative officers.

A.5 The size, duties, responsibilities, ethical conduct requirements, structure and operating procedures, and processes for assessing the performance of the governing board are clearly defined and published in board policies or by-laws. The board acts in a manner consistent with them.

A.6 The governing board has a program for new member orientation and governing board development.

A.7 The board is informed about and involved in the accreditation process.

B. Institutional Administration and Governance

B.1 The institutional chief executive officer provides effective leadership to define goals, develop plans, and establish priorities for the institution.

B.2 The institutional chief executive officer efficiently manages resources, implements priorities controlling budget and expenditures, and ensures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and board policies.

B.3 The institution is administratively organized and staffed to reflect the institution's purposes, size, and complexity. The administration provides effective and efficient leadership and management which makes possible an effective teaching and learning environment.

B.4 Administrative officers are qualified by training and experience to perform their responsibilities and are evaluated systematically and regularly. The duties and responsibilities of institutional administrators are clearly defined and published.

B.5 Administration has a substantive and clearly-defined role in institutional governance.

B.6 Faculty have a substantive and clearly-defined role in institutional governance, exercise a substantial voice in matters of educational program and faculty personnel, and other institutional polices which relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise.

B.7 Faculty have established an academic senate or other appropriate organization for providing input regarding institutional governance. In the case of private colleges, the institution has a formal process for providing input regarding institutional governance.

B.8 The institution has written policy which identifies appropriate institutional support for faculty participation in governance and delineates the participation of faculty on appropriate policy, planning, and special purpose bodies.

B.9 The institution clearly states and publicizes the role of staff in institutional governance.

B.10 The institution clearly states and publicizes the role of students in institutional governance.

C. Multi-College Districts and/or Systems

C.1 The district/system chief executive officer provides effective leadership to define goals, develop plans, and establish priorities for the institution.

C.2 The district/system chief executive officer efficiently manages resources, implements priorities controlling budget and expenditures, and ensures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and board policies.

C.3 The district/system has a statement which clearly delineates the operational responsibilities and functions of the district/system and those of the college.

C.4 The district/system provides effective services that support the mission and functions of the college.

C.5 The district/system and the college(s) have established and utilize effective methods of communication and exchange information in a timely and efficient manner.

C.6 The district/system has effective processes in place for the establishment and review of policy, planning, and financial management.

PART III

COMMISSION POLICIES

TESTIMONIAL POLICIES

Testimonial Policies have been adopted by the Commission as public position statements. Testimonial policies define good practice in more detail than do the accreditation standards and are intended to offer guidance to member institutions and to the Commission itself. Such policies are adopted after broad consultation among member institutions and with other agencies that make up the regional accrediting community.

CREDIT FOR PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

(Adopted June 1980, Revised June 1990)

It is the position of the Commission that the academy has a significant role beyond that of certifying what a student has learned elsewhere. It is within the academy that a student earns academic degrees.

Credit for prior experiential learning is offered only under the conditions enumerated below. This policy is not designed to apply to such practices as CLEP, advanced placement, or ACE evaluated military credit. Questions about this policy should be referred to Commission staff.

In developing and publishing its guidelines and procedures, it is suggested that institutions follow the "Principles of Good Practice in Assessing Experiential Learning" represented by the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL)* and the American Council on Education.**

1. Before credit for prior experiential learning becomes part of the student's permanent record, the student completes, at the credit-granting institution, a sufficient number of units to establish evidence of a satisfactory learning pattern.

2. Portfolio-based credit for prior experiential learning is awarded for no more than 30 semester units, or the equivalent, toward the Associate Degree. Credit is awarded only for documented learning which ties the prior experience to the theories and data of the relevant academic field.

3. Credit is awarded only in areas which fall within the regular curricular offerings of the institution and are part of the instructional program the student completes.

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*Willingham, Warren W. Principles of Good Practice in Assessing Experiential Learning. CAEL, American City Building, Suite 40-3, Columbia, MD 21044, 1977.

**American Council on Education. ``Principles of Good Practice for Alternative and External Degree Programs for Adults." ACE, Publications Department A, One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036, 1990.

4. Institutions using documentation and interviews in lieu of examinations, demonstrate that the documentation provides academic assurances of equivalency to credit earned by traditional means.

5. No assurances are made in advance regarding the number of credits to be awarded.

6. Credit is awarded only by faculty holding regular appointments in the appropriate discipline. The awarding of credit, and the determination of the amount of such credit, is made by qualified faculty members. The faculty ensures that assessment procedures are appropriate for the credit awarded.

7. Only college level learning is creditable, consistent with the academic standards of the institution.

8. Credit is awarded only to matriculated students and is identified on the student's transcript as "credit for prior experiential learning." The institution is prepared, on request from another institution, to furnish full documentation showing how such learning was evaluated and the basis on which such credit was awarded.

9. Steps are taken to ensure that credit for prior experiential learning does not duplicate credit already awarded or remaining courses planned for the student's academic program.

10. Policies and procedures for awarding experiential learning credit are adopted, described in appropriate institutional publications, and reviewed at regular intervals.

11. Fees charged are realistically related to the cost of the program. Adequate precautions are provided to ensure that payment of fees does not influence the award of credit.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN OVERSEAS INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR NON-U.S. NATIONALS

Regional Institutional Accrediting Bodies
Council on Postsecondary Accreditation

February 1990

Preface

The Executive Directors of the regional institutional accrediting bodies of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation subscribe to the following "Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals." Each regional institutional accrediting body will apply these principles consistent with its own accrediting standards.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Institutional Mission

1. The international program is rooted in the U.S. institution's stated mission and purposes and reflects any special social, religious, and ethical elements of that mission.

2. The faculty, administration, and governing board of the U.S. institution understand the relationship of the international program to the institution's stated mission and purposes.

Authorization

3. The international program has received all appropriate internal approvals where required, including system administration, government bodies, and accrediting associations.

4. The international program has received all appropriate external approvals where required, including system administration, government bodies, and accrediting associations.

5. The U.S. institution documents the accepted legal basis for its operations in the host country.

Instructional Program

6. The U.S. institution specifies the educational needs to be met by its international program.

7. The content of the international educational program is subject to review by the U.S. institution's faculty.

8. The international education program reflects the educational emphasis of the U.S. institution, including a commitment to general education when appropriate.

9. The educational program is taught by faculty with appropriate academic preparation and language proficiencies whose credentials have been reviewed by the U.S. institution.

10. The standard of student achievement in the international program is equivalent to the standard of student achievement on the U.S. campus.

11. The international educational program where possible and appropriate is adapted to the culture of the host country.

Resources

12. The institution currently uses and assures the continuing use of adequate physical facilities for its international educational program, including classrooms, offices, libraries, and laboratories, and provides access to computer facilities where appropriate.

13. The U.S. institution has demonstrated its financial capacity to underwrite the international program without diminishing its financial support of the U.S. campus. Financing of the international program is incorporated into the regular budgeting and auditing process.

Admissions and Records

14. International students admitted abroad meet admissions requirements similar to those used for international students admitted to the U.S. campus, including appropriate language proficiencies.

15. The U.S. institution exercises control over recruitment and admission of students in the international program.

16. All international students admitted to the U.S. program are recognized as students of the U.S. institution.

17. All college-level academic credits earned in the international program are applicable to degree programs at the U.S. institution.

18. The U.S. institution maintains official records of academic credit earned in its international program.

19. The official transcript of record issued by the U.S. institution follows the institution's practices in identifying by site or through course numbering, the credits earned in its off-campus programs.

Students

20. The U.S. institution assures that its institutional program provides a supportive environment for student development, consistent with the culture and mores of the international setting.

21. Students in the international program are fully informed as to services that will or will not be provided.

Control and Administration

22. The international program is controlled by the U.S. institution.

23. The teaching and administrative staff abroad responsible for the educational quality of the international program are accountable to a resident administrator of the U.S. institution.

24. The U.S. institution formally and regularly reviews all faculty and staff associated with its international program.

25. The U.S. institution assesses its international program on a regular basis in light of institutional goals and incorporates these outcomes into its regular planning process.

Ethics and Public Disclosure

26. The U.S. institution can provide to its accrediting agencies upon request a full accounting of the financing of its international program, including an accounting of funds designated for third parties within any contractual relationship.

27. The U.S. institution assures that all media presentations about the international program are factual, fair, and accurate.

28. The U.S. institution's primary catalog describes its international program.

29. The U.S. institution does not sell or franchise the rights to its name or its accreditation.

30. The U.S. institution assures that all references to transfer of academic credit reflects the reality of U.S. practice.

31. The U.S. institution assures that if U.S. accreditation is mentioned in materials

related to the international program, the role and purpose of U.S. accreditation is fairly and accurately explained within these materials.

Contractual Arrangements

32. The official contract is in English and the primary language of the contracting institution.

33. The contract specifically provides that the U.S. institution controls the international program in conformity with these guidelines and the requirements of the U.S. institution's accreditations.

34. The U.S. institution confirms that the foreign party to the contract is legally qualified to enter into the contract.

35. The contract clearly states the legal jurisdiction under which its provisions will be interpreted will be that of the U.S. institution.

36. Conditions for program termination specified in the contract include appropriate protection for enrolled students.

37. All contractual arrangements must be consistent with the regional commissions' document, ``Contractual Relationships With Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations."

Adopted February 12, 1990 by the Executive Directors of the Regional Institutional Accrediting Bodies:

Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission Institutions of Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Commission on Vocational, Technical, and Career Institutions, New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission on Colleges, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Commission on Occupational Education Institutions, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Adopted June 1, 1990 by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH NON-REGIONALLY ACCREDITED ORGANIZATIONS

(Adopted March 1973)

No postsecondary educational institution accredited by a regional institutional accrediting commission can lend the prestige or authority of its accreditation to authenticate courses or programs offered under contract with organizations not so accredited unless it demonstrates adherence to the following principles:

1. The primary purpose of offering such a course or program is educational. (Although the primary purpose of the offering must be educational, what ancillary purposes also provide the foundation for the program or course such as auxiliary services, anticipated income, and public relations?)

2. Any course offered must be consistent with the institution's educational purpose and objectives as they were at the time of the last evaluation. If the institution alters its purpose and objectives, the regional commission must be notified and the policy on substantive change applied. (How does the institution define the specific relationship between the primary and ancillary purposes and the contracted service and how does it demonstrate its capability to attain these purposes?)

3. Courses to be offered and the value and level of their credit must be determined in accordance with established institutional procedures, and under the usual mechanisms of review. (What evidence exists that established institutional procedures have been followed?)

4. Courses offered for credit must remain under the sole and direct control of the sponsoring accredited institution, which exercises ultimate and continuing responsibility for the performance of these functions as reflected in the contract, with provisions to assure that conduct of the courses meets the standards of its regular programs as disclosed fully in the institution's publications, especially as these pertain to

    a. Recruitment and counseling of students;

    b. Admission of students to courses and/or to the sponsoring institution where credit programs are pursued;

    c. Instruction in the courses.

    d. Evaluation of student progress.

    e. Record keeping.

    f. Tuition and/or fees charged, receipt and disbursement of funds, and refund policy.

    g. Appointment and validation of credentials of faculty teaching the course.

    h. Nature and location of courses.

i. Instructional resources, such as the library.

Additional data needed would include course outlines, syllabi, copies of exams, records of students, and evidence of equivalencies with established programs.

In establishing contractual arrangements with non-regionally accredited organizations, institutions are expected to utilize the following guidelines. The not-for-profit institution should establish that its tax-exempt status, as governed by state or federal regulations, will not be affected by such contractual arrangements with a for-profit organization.

The Contract

1. Should be executed only by duly designated officers of the institution and their counterparts in the contracting organization. While other faculty and administrative representatives will undoubtedly be involved in the contract negotiations, care should be taken to avoid implied or apparent power to execute the contract by unauthorized personnel.

2. Should establish a definite understanding between the institution and contractor regarding the work to be performed, the period of the agreement, and the conditions under which any possible renewal or renegotiation of the contract would take place.

3. Should clearly vest the ultimate responsibility for the performance of the necessary control functions for the educational offering with the accredited institution granting credit for the offering. Such performance responsibility by the credit-granting institution would minimally consist of adequate provision for review and approval of work performed in each functional area by the contractor.

4. Should clearly establish the responsibilities of the institution and contractor regarding

    a. Indirect costs
    b. Approval of salaries
    c. Equipment
    d. Subcontracts and travel
    e. Property ownership and accountability
    f. Inventions and patents
    g. Publications and copyrights
    h. Accounting records and audits
    i. Security
    j. Termination costs
    k. Tuition refund
    l. Student records
    m. Faculty facilities
    n. Safety regulations
    o. Insurance coverage

Enrollment Agreement

1. The enrollment agreement should clearly outline the obligations of both the institution and the student, and a copy of the enrollment agreement should be furnished to the student before any payment is made.

2. The institution should determine that each applicant is fully informed as to the nature of the obligation being entered into and the applicant's responsibilities and rights under the enrollment agreement before the applicant signs it.
3. No enrollment agreement should be binding until it has been accepted by the authorities of the institution vested with this responsibility.

Tuition Policies

1. Rates

    a. The total tuition for any specific given course should be the same for all persons at any given time. Group training contracts showing lower individual rates may be negotiated with business, industrial, or governmental agencies.

    b. Tuition charges in courses should be *bona fide,* effective on specific dates, and applicable to all who enroll thereafter or are presently in school, provided the enrollment agreement so stipulates.

    c. All extra charges and costs incidental to training should be revealed to the prospective student before enrollment.

    d. The institution should show that the total tuition charges for each of its courses is reasonable in the light of the service to be rendered, the equipment to be furnished, and its operating costs.

2. Refunds and Cancellations

    a. The institution should have a fair and equitable tuition refund and cancellation policy.

    b. The institution should publish its tuition refund and cancellation policy in its catalog or other appropriate literature.

3. Collection Practices

    a. Methods used by an institution in requesting or demanding payment should follow sound ethical business practices.

    b. If promissory notes or contracts for tuition are sold or discounted to third parties by the institution, enrollees or their financial sponsors should be aware of this action.

Student Recruitment

1. Advertising and Promotional Literature

    a. All advertisements and promotional literature used should be truthful and avoid leaving any false, misleading, or exaggerated impressions with respect to the school, its personnel, its courses and services, or the occupational opportunities for its graduates.

    b. All advertising and promotional literature used should clearly indicate that education, and not employment, is being offered.

    c. All advertising and promotional literature should include the correct name of the school. So-called ``blind" advertisements are considered misleading and unethical.

2. Field Agents

a. An institution is responsible to its current and prospective students for the representations made by its field representatives (including agencies and other authorized persons or firms soliciting students), and therefore should select each of them with the utmost care, provide them with adequate training, and arrange for proper supervision of their work.

b. It is the responsibility of an institution to conform to the laws and regulations of each of the areas in which it operates or solicits students, and in particular to see that each of its field representatives is properly licensed or registered as required by the laws of the state or other entity.

c. If field representatives are authorized to prepare and/or run advertising or to use promotional materials, the institution should accept full responsibility for the materials used and should approve any such in advance of their use.

d. When field representatives are authorized to collect money from an applicant for enrollment, they should leave with the applicant a receipt for the money collected and a copy of the enrollment agreement.

e. No field representative should use any title, such as " counselor," " advisor," or " registrar," that tends to indicate that his duties and responsibilities are other than they actually are.

f. No field agent should violate orally any of the standards applicable to advertising and promotional material.

POLICY STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY

(Adopted January, 1994)

How an institution deals with diversity is an important indicator of its integrity and effectiveness. Institutions accredited by the Commission consider diversity issues in a thorough and professional manner. Every institution affiliated with the Commission is expected to provide and sustain an environment in which all persons in the college community can interact on a basis of accepting differences, respecting each individual, and valuing diversity. Each institution is responsible for assessing the quality and diversity of its campus environment and for demonstrating how diversity is served by the goals and mission of the college and district. In addition, institutions must identify the processes that actively promote diversity in the everyday environment and the academic programs of the college. Accreditation teams will evaluate the condition of institutional diversity during the site visits and include findings and recommendations in written reports to the Accrediting Commission.

The Commission Statement on Diversity is designed to guide institutions and evaluation teams in the self study and site visit process and to indicate how institution-wide reviews of issues of diversity should be documented in the self study and visiting team reports. The Accrediting Commission, taking into account the mission of the institution and the entirety of the self study and peer review processes, will evaluate the institution's effectiveness in addressing issues of diversity.

THE GOVERNING BOARD

(Adopted June 1996)

Institutions of higher education in the United States have a long tradition of governance by lay boards of citizen trustees. A trustee is one to whom property is entrusted for management. In the case of colleges, the board of trustees holds the institution in trust on behalf of the owners, to ensure that the institution is operating effectively and efficiently in accordance with its established mission. For private colleges, the owners may be a nonprofit corporation, a religious order or denomination, or a for-profit corporation. For public institutions, the owners may be a governmental entity or a geographic district. In each case the board includes qualified lay persons who are unencumbered by conflicts of interest. Regional accrediting associations require as a condition of eligibility that member institutions have an independent, policy-making board, with a majority of members who have no employment, ownership, familial or personal relationship with the institution. This latter condition is to ensure impartial exercise of judgment on behalf of the owners and users of the institution.

All boards act on behalf of their owners. Owners may be remote and have a limited range of concerns, or they may have a more immediate presence and establish rather detailed expectations. In every case, however, there is a delegation of authority from owners to trustees, with the clear understanding that trustees may act on behalf of owners to direct the affairs of the college, without compromising legitimate ownership interests.

Boards of public institutions may be elected or appointed, subject to laws and regulations of the political entity that owns the institution. The practice in private institutions is ordinarily appointment of trustees by a self-perpetuating board, appointment by owners/sponsors, or a combination. The duty of the board is to make policy, while *administration,* the day-to-day management of the institution – is the duty of the chief executive and staff. This traditional dividing line is an oversimplification, in that faculty in many institutions play significant roles in policy-making, and administrative authority is in many cases delegated to others than the president's staff.

In his paper, "Policy and Administration," published by the Association of Governing Boards, Charles A. Nelson defines policy as "a general rule of principle, or a statement of intent or direction, which provides guidance to administrators in reaching decisions with respect to the particular matters entrusted to their care." Institutions in public systems are guided and directed by laws and regulations that establish basic rights and responsibilities of their governing boards. Boards that serve private institutions frequently rely on associations such as the Association of Governing Boards or institutional associations of private institutions to offer guidance as to good practice.

A board needs to establish the level of policy at which it will operate, thus determining the levels of policy at which the administration will operate. Where policy responsibility is formally shared, as it may with faculties on academic issues, the board sets boundaries for itself by formal delegation to others. Size and complexity, and public or private control, will influence the level of policy at which a board operates.

Boards need rules, for themselves as well as for the institution. Bylaws or policies that establish regular meeting times, structuring of agendas, decision-making, and codes of ethics including prohibitions on conflicts of interest help to not only make the board effective, but also to build trust in the integrity of the board.

Oversight responsibility – the obligation to ensure that the mission of the institution is being appropriately served, and that its established goals are faithfully pursued, is a major duty of a board. The board asks questions about achievement of intended outcomes, as part of its acting on behalf of the owners of the institution. The board protects the institution from external pressures, and is an advocate for the best interests of the institution.

The board must be concerned about its own effectiveness, as well as that of the executive and the institution. Boards systematically evaluate the executive, and evaluate their own effectiveness. Board effectiveness may be substantially enhanced by participation in programs of board education offered by organizations such as the Association of Governing Boards, the Association of Community College Trustees, and the Community College League of California.

NATIONAL POLICIES

National Policies adopted by major higher education associations advise accrediting agencies and their member institutions about good practice. The following policies have been adopted by ACCJC and the other regional accrediting agencies. The Commission regularly renews its commitment to the principles expressed in the policies through a process of Commission review. In some cases the original adopting body is no longer in existence; however, the accrediting agencies' joint adoption remains in place.

Note: The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) referred to in several policies dissolved in December 1993. The Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA) was incorporated in January 1994 to continue the recognition process for accrediting agencies. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation was incorporated in July 1996 to recognize accrediting bodies, coordinate accreditation functions, foster innovation in accreditation, assist in resolving disputes, and serve as a national voice for self-regulation through accreditation.

POLICY STATEMENT ON THE ROLE AND VALUE OF ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is an activity long accepted in the United States, but generally unknown in most other countries because other countries rely on governmental supervision and control of educational institutions. The record of accomplishment and outstanding success in the education of Americans can be traced in large part to the reluctance of the United States to impose governmental restrictions on institutions of postsecondary education and to the success of the voluntary American system of accreditation in promoting quality without inhibiting innovation. The high proportion of Americans benefiting from higher education, the reputation of universities in the United States for both fundamental and applied research, and the widespread availability of professional services in the United States all testify to postsecondary education of high quality and to the success of the accreditation system which the institutions and professions of the United States have devised to promote that quality.

I.

Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution or a program that has been found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality. In the United States accreditation is voluntarily sought by institutions and programs and is conferred by non-governmental bodies.

Accreditation has two fundamental purposes: to assure the quality of the institution or program, and to assist in the improvement of the institution or program. Accreditation, which applies to institutions or programs, is to be distinguished from certification and licensure, which apply to individuals.

The bodies conducting institutional accreditation are national or regional in scope and comprise the institutions that have achieved and maintain accreditation. A specialized body conducting accreditation of a program preparing students for a profession or occupation is often closely associated with professional associations in the field.

Both institutional and specialized bodies conduct the accreditation process using a common pattern. The pattern requires integral self study of the institution or program, followed by an on-site visit by an evaluation team, and a subsequent review and decision by a central governing group. Within this general pattern the various accrediting bodies have developed a variety of individual procedures adapted to their own circumstances. Increasingly, attention has been given to educational outcomes as a basis for evaluation.

Members of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation have been found by COPA to meet specific criteria of procedure and organization regarded as necessary for the effective conduct of the accrediting process. A COPA-recognized accrediting body can be regarded as qualified to conduct evaluations of institutions and/or programs seeking accreditation, and accreditation by such bodies is generally recognized and accepted in higher education.

Institutional or specialized accreditation cannot guarantee the quality of individual graduates or of individual courses within an institution or program but can give reasonable assurance of the context and quality of the education offered.

II.

An institutional accrediting body considers the characteristics of whole institutions. For this reason an institutional accrediting body gives attention not only to the educational offerings of the institutions it accredits, but also to other such institutional characteristics as the student personnel services, financial conditions, and administrative strength.

The criteria of an institutional accrediting body are broad, as is demanded by the attention to an entire institution and by the presence in the United States of postsecondary institutions of widely different purposes and scopes. Such criteria also provide encouragement to institutions to try innovative curricula and procedures, and to adopt them when they prove successful. The accreditation of an institution by an institutional accrediting body certifies to the general public that the institution:

a. Has appropriate purposes.

b. Has the resources needed to accomplish its purposes.

c. Can demonstrate that it is accomplishing its purposes.

d. Gives reason to believe that it will continue to accomplish its purposes.

Institutional improvement is encouraged by an institutional accrediting body through the requirement that the accredited institution conduct periodic self-evaluations seeking to identify what the institution does well, determining the areas in which improvement is needed, and developing plans to address needed improvements. While the certification of accreditation indicates an acceptable level of institutional quality, an institution, however excellent, is capable of improvement, which must come from its own clear identification and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

Institutional improvement is also encouraged by the institutional accrediting body through the advice and counsel provided by the visiting team, which is comprised of experienced educators drawn primarily from accredited institutions, and by the publications of the accrediting body.

III.

A specialized accrediting body focuses its attention on a particular program within an institution of higher education. The close relationship of the specialized accrediting body with the professional association for the field helps insure that the requirements for accreditation are related to the current requirements for professional practice.

In a number of fields (*e.g.*, medicine, law, dentistry) graduation from an accredited program in the field is a requirement for receiving a license to practice in the field. Thus, specialized accreditation is recognized as providing a basic assurance of the scope and quality of professional or occupational preparation. This focus of specialized accreditation leads to accreditation requirements that are generally sharply directed to the nature of the program, including specific requirements for resources needed to provide a program satisfactory for professional preparation. Because of this limitation of focus to a single program, many specialized accrediting bodies require that the institution offering the program be institutionally accredited before consideration can be given to program accreditation.

Specialized accreditation encourages program improvement by application of specific accreditation requirements to measure characteristics of a program and by making judgments about the overall quality of the program. For a non-accredited program, the accreditation requirements serve as specific goals to be achieved. In addition to accrediting standards, assistance for program improvement is provided through the counsel of the accreditation visiting team members, which include practitioners of the profession and experienced and successful faculty members and administrators in other institutions.

IV.

Institutional and specialized accreditation are complementary. The focus of an institutional accrediting body on an institution as a total operating unit provides assurance that the general characteristics of the institution have been examined and found to be satisfactory. The focus of a specialized accrediting body on a specific program provides assurance that the details of that particular program meet the external accreditation standards. Institutional accreditation, concerned with evaluating the institution as a whole, does not seek to deal with any particular program in great detail although programs are reviewed as a part of the consideration of the entire institution. Specialized accreditation, speaking to a specific program, does not seek to deal significantly with the general conditions of the institution, although certain general conditions are considered in the context in which the accredited program is offered. Occasionally there are institutions offering but a single program (``free-standing" schools), which may seek institutional and/or specialized accreditation. In such cases, the certification of the accreditation is that appropriate to either institutional or specialized accreditation, and does not imply both certifications, although a specialized body accrediting such an institution is expected to look at the whole institution, just as the institutional body is expected to consider the single educational program.

V.

In fulfilling its two purposes – quality assurance and institutional and program improvement – accreditation provides service of value to several constituencies.

To the **public**, the values of accreditation include:

a. An assurance of external evaluation of the institution or program and a finding that there is conformity to general expectations in higher education or the professional field.

b. An identification of institutions and programs which have voluntarily undertaken explicit activities directed at improving the quality of the institution and its professional programs and are carrying them out successfully.

c. An improvement in the professional services available to the public, as accredited programs modify their requirements to reflect changes in knowledge and practice generally accepted in the field.
d. A decreased need for intervention by public agencies in the operations of educational institutions, since their institutions through accreditation are providing privately for the maintenance and enhancement of educational quality.

To s**tudents**, accreditation provides

a. An assurance that the educational activities of an accredited institution or program have been found to be satisfactory and therefore meet the needs of students.

b. Assistance in the transfer of credits between institutions, or in the admission of students to advanced degrees through the general acceptance of credits among accredited institutions when the performance of the student has been satisfactory and the credits to be transferred are appropriate to the receiving institution.

c. A prerequisite in many cases for entering a profession.

Institutions of higher education benefit from accreditation through:

a. The stimulus provided for self-evaluation and self-directed institutional and program improvement.

b. The strengthening of institutional and program self-evaluation by the review and counsel provided through the accrediting body.

c. The application of criteria of accrediting bodies, generally accepted throughout higher education, which help guard against external encroachments harmful to institutional or program quality by providing benchmarks independent of forces that might impinge on individual institutions.

d. The enhancing of the reputation of an accredited institution or program because of public regard for accreditation.

e. The use of accreditation as one means by which an institution can gain eligibility for the participation of itself and its students in certain programs of governmental aid to postsecondary education; accreditation is also usually relied upon by private foundations as a highly desirable indicator of institutional and program quality.

Accreditation serves the **professions** by:

a. Providing a means for the participation of practitioners in setting the requirements for preparation to enter the professions.

b. Contributing to the unity of the professions by bringing together practitioners, teachers, and students in an activity directed at improving professional preparation and professional practice.

Adopted by the COPA Board April 15, 1982, Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

POLICY STATEMENT ON RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ACCREDITING BODIES AND INSTITUTIONS IN THE ACCREDITING PROCESS

Preface

American higher education is a diverse, semi-autonomous and independent composite of institutions and programs. In the diversity of the system lies its strength. By design, postsecondary education functions with considerable latitude and few restrictions. Compared with most other countries, in America there has been a remarkable degree of freedom from government regulation and intrusion. This freedom has been achieved and maintained in large measure because the self-regulatory process of accreditation balances institutional autonomy, independence, and freedom with the institution's responsibilities to students, to the public, to the profession, and to various levels of government. Voluntary accreditation involves mutual understanding and respect for the rights and responsibilities of institutions and the rights and responsibilities of accrediting bodies. The national, nongovernmental accreditation system is the key in ensuring that education remains fundamentally sound, responsible, responsive, and effective, thereby providing public confidence in the integrity and quality of educational institutions and programs.

Preconditions

A statement related to rights and responsibilities of institutions/programs and accrediting bodies is rooted in general assumptions:

1. That the institutions/programs and accrediting bodies are partners in the system of voluntary nongovernmental evaluation.

2. That there is a mutual commitment among institutions/programs and accrediting bodies to:

    a. Voluntary self-regulation
    b. Assessment and enhancement of educational quality
    c. Candor
    d. Cooperation
    e. Integrity
    f. Confidence and trust

Given these preconditions there are certain reciprocal institutional/programmatic and accrediting body rights and responsibilities that relate directly (1) to the development and promulgation of accreditation standards and (2) to the various stages of the accrediting process.

A. Development and Promulgation of Standards

Institutions/programs and accrediting bodies, in cooperation with each other, have the responsibility to:

1. Involve broad participation of affected constituencies in the development and acceptance of standards and policies.

2. Develop standards and policies which:

   a. Are consistent with the purposes of accreditation.

   b. Are sufficiently flexible to allow diversity and effective program development.

   c. Allow and encourage institutional/programmatic freedom and autonomy.

   d. Allow the institution/program to exercise its rights within a reasonable set of parameters relevant to the quality of education and, in professional fields, to prepare individuals effectively for practice in the profession.

3. Conduct periodic reviews of the standards.

B. Five Stages of Accreditation Actions or Process and Concomitant Statements of Rights and Responsibilities

Stage 1: Basic Procedures

a. The institution/program develops and implements an institutional policy for seeking, securing, and maintaining accredited status with institutional or specialized accrediting bodies.

b. The institution/program develops an effective mechanism to ensure the internal coordination of accrediting activities.

c. In corresponding with representatives on campus, the accrediting body routinely provides copies to the chief executive and, where appropriate, the chief academic officer and/or director of the program.

d. The accrediting body refrains from advertising or soliciting applications for accreditation from institutions/programs.

Stage 2: Information Requested and Supplied (Including the Self Study)

a. The institution/program determines how it will conduct its self study and the accrediting body specifies the items to be addressed in the report.

b. The accrediting body requires only information that is relevant to accrediting standards and policies, and, whenever possible, this information will be coordinated with information requested by other accrediting bodies.

c. The institution/program involves broad and appropriate constituent groups in the preparation and process of self study.

d. The institution/program discloses to the accrediting body that information which is required to carry out the accrediting body's evaluation and accrediting functions (with due regard to individual privacy).

e. The accrediting body and institution/program respect the confidentiality of information required and evaluated in the accrediting process.

Stage 3: The Site Visit and Review

a. When requested by the institution/program, the accrediting body (in consultation with the institution/program and when feasible) conducts joint, concurrent, coordinated, consolidated, or phased visits.

b. The accrediting body, in consultation with the institution/program, selects site visitors who are:

1. Competent by virtue of experience, training, and orientation;

2. Sensitive to the uniqueness of the institution and/or program; and

3. Impartial, objective, and without conflict of interest.

c. The accrediting body ensures that the composition, team size, and length of the visit are:

1. Determined in consultation with the institution/program

2. Determined with regard to the size and complexity of the institution/program.

3. Most appropriate to accomplish the objectives of the visit.

d. The institution/program provides maximum opportunity for communication with all relevant constituencies.

e. The accrediting body communicates its findings derived from the site visit to the institution/program.

f. The accrediting body ensures that the report identifies and distinguishes clearly between statements directly related to quality-assessment and those representing suggestions for quality-improvement.

g. The accrediting body provides the chief executive officer of the institution (and the chief academic officer and/or the director of the program) with an opportunity to comment on the written report of the visiting team and to file supplemental materials pertinent to the facts and conclusions therein before the accrediting body takes action on the report.

Stage 4: The Decision (Including the Following)

- Commission action
- Conveyance of action
- Appeal
- Public announcement of action

a. The accrediting body permits the withdrawal of a request for any status of accreditation at any time prior to the decision on that request.

b. The accrediting body makes decisions solely on the basis of published standards, policies, and procedures using information available and made known to the institution/program.

c. The accrediting body avoids conflicts of interest in the decision making process.

d. The accrediting body ensures the confidentiality of those deliberations in which accrediting decisions are made, but due process will be observed in all deliberations.

e. The accrediting body notifies institutions and programs promptly in writing of accrediting decisions, giving reasons for the actions.

f. The accrediting body ensures that the communication of the final accrediting decision, *i.e.*, the notification letter and/or final report, identifies and clearly distinguishes between statements directly related to quality-assessment and those representing suggestions for quality-improvement.

g. The institution/program has a right to appeal an accrediting decision in accordance with the policies of the accrediting body and to maintain its accredited status during the appeal.

h. The accrediting body publishes accrediting decisions, both affirmative and negative, except for initial denial which need not be made public.

i. The accrediting body maintains the confidentiality of the final report, but it may request that corrective action be taken if an institution/program releases information misrepresenting or distorting any accreditation action taken by the body or the status of affiliation with the accrediting body. If the institution/program is not prompt in taking corrective action, the accrediting body may further release a public statement providing the correct information.

Stage 5: Follow-Up (Including interim reports and reapplication)

a. The accrediting body can request periodic reports, special reports, and consultative activities relevant to the institution's/program's accreditation status.

b. The accrediting body provides written notice to the institution/program of the action taken in relation to a special report or visit.

c. The accrediting body may request the reevaluation of an institution/program at any time for cause.

d. The institution/program has an obligation to inform the accrediting body of any substantive changes.

e. The institution/program has a right to have pertinent information provided concerning reapplication requirements for accreditation under the terms and conditions specified by the accrediting body.

f. Separate from the accrediting process leading to a decision on accredited status, the accrediting body assists and stimulates improvement of the educational effectiveness of an institution/program, and to this end makes provision for appropriate assistance.

Adopted by the COPA Board April 19, 1985 Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

INTERREGIONAL POLICIES ON THE ACCREDITATION OF INSTITUTIONS OPERATING ACROSS REGIONS

(Adopted June 2000)

Preamble

The purpose of these policies is to establish and define the respective roles of the regional higher education accrediting commissions in assuring quality and encouraging the improvement of affiliated institutions operating interregionally. Developed by the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (CRAC), they are designed to address concerns arising from differences that may exist among regional commission criteria and their application in off-campus operations. The interregional policies encompass only those colleges and universities which have physical presence, appropriate state authorization, and offer instruction equivalent to 50% or more of a degree program in another (host) region(s) than their home region where they hold accreditation. Once adopted, however modified, these polices will encompass all regionally accredited institutions and will establish a common framework for the evaluation of institutions operating interregionally.

These policies are based upon the following fundamental premises:

$ The home region should be demonstrably accountable for its accreditation decisions affecting institutions operating in host regions.
$ The host region has a legitimate interest in the quality of institutions from other regions operating within its jurisdiction.
$ The home and host regions, while honoring these policies and the procedures designed to implement them, have flexibility in defining the host region's role in the evaluation of instructional sites operating in its region.
$ The eight regional commissions, building on their commonality of tradition and longstanding mutual respect, will work cooperatively, together with affected institutions, to implement these policies toward the fulfillment of their quality assurance responsibilities in the review of transregional programming while honoring institutional autonomy and integrity.

These policies represent a departure from past practice. Their continued efficacy rests upon the commitment of the involved commissions to assess their effectiveness and otherwise determine their impact on their member institutions, making modifications as are necessary. For that reason, CRAC has recommended that these policies be implemented on a three-year (2000-2003) pilot basis. While it is expected that once in force the policies will materially affect the evaluation of institutions operating across regional boundaries, it is also understood that first experiences will likely result in the need for corrections and adjustments in their content. For that reason, CRAC is committed to undertake in 2003 a basic review of the effectiveness of the policies in achieving their purposes.

POLICY STATEMENT ON THE EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONS OPERATING INTERREGIONALLY

To preserve the values and practices of peer review and regional accreditation, the evaluation of institutions that deliver education at a physical site(s) in another region(s) will be undertaken with the participation of the host regional accrediting commission(s). This will include the joint (home/host) review of off-campus sites in a host region against the accreditation standards of that region.

Procedures for the evaluation of colleges and universities operating interregionally will honor these basic principles:

$ The mission of the institution will be respected throughout the evaluation process.
$ The design and implementation of the strategy fashioned to evaluate its host region instructional sites will be developed collaboratively by the participating regional commissions together with the affected institution.
$ The home region's evaluation processes will serve as the basis for the joint evaluations and the home region will take the leadership role in initiating and overseeing the process.
$ The home region will be solely responsible for final accrediting actions, but will respond to issues brought to its attention by the host commission as identified through its involvement in the institutional review.
$ Host commission participation in an interregional accrediting process shall not constitute accreditation of the institution by that commission.
$ The host region retains the discretion to determine its involvement in the evaluation of institutions operating interregionally.

Exchanging Information

To assure that each commission is adequately apprised of the instructional activities of out-of-region institutions in its region, the following information will be exchanged as specified:

A. Annually, each commission will notify the other affected commissions of any of its institutions operating interregionally. The information provided will include: location(s), levels of degree offerings, and number of students enrolled. It is understood here as elsewhere, that notice need only be provided regarding those locations where 50% or more of a degree program are offered.
B. Each commission will notify other relevant commissions when one of its institutions intends to establish a new out-of-region instructional site. In such cases, the home commission in consultation with the host region together with the institution, will determine if the new site(s) constitute a substantive change and thus be subject to review under the interregional accrediting processes.

Procedures for the Interregional Accrediting Process

Notice to Host Region of Planned Evaluations

The home region will provide timely notice to the host region(s) of

A. scheduled comprehensive evaluations of institutions with instructional sites in the host region;
B. any focused visits which include the review of sites in the host region or includes issues related to off-campus programming;
C. any other evaluations of new sites in the host region.

Procedures for Evaluations

A. Standards to be applied. The standards of both the home and host region will be applied at host region sites using a "home standards plus" model. That is, the standards of the home region will be used as the basis for the evaluation as

supplemented by any criteria of the host region identified in the design process for the evaluation.

B. Evaluation protocol. Well in advance of the comprehensive visit, the home and host commissions, in consultation with the institution, will develop a protocol for the evaluation of host region sites to include: 1) the scope of the review; 2) which sites are to be reviewed, with the final decision remaining with the home region; 3) the content of the self-study report(s) for the sites to be visited with particular attention to how identified host region standards are to be addressed; and 4) any other matters of agreement relevant to the evaluation, including issues of possible public disclosure.

C. Site team composition. The size and composition of the team visiting host region sites will be jointly determined, with the host region being afforded the opportunity to appoint up to 50% of the team's membership. The host region may appoint a vice or co-chair as agreed upon by the home region. Teams will otherwise be appointed in keeping with home region procedures. It is understood that the host region's conflict of interest policy will apply for the team members it appoints.

D. Costs. The costs for the evaluation of host region sites will be billed in keeping with the home region's policies. The home region will otherwise administer reimbursement of evaluator expense also in keeping with its policies.

Procedures for Evaluation Reports

A. A single evaluation report will be prepared for each of the sites visited within the host region, as agreed upon by the commissions involved.

B. The evaluation report will include a review of the site under the home region's standards, and as appropriate, findings regarding the host region's standards

as

previously identified and any topics included in the evaluation under prior agreement. Recommendations to the home region can be made by both home and host sub-groups on the team.

C. Site team reports are provided to the host region by the home region upon receipt. In cases of comprehensive evaluations, the home region's institutional evaluation report is also forwarded to the host region.

D. The host region is responsible for establishing processes for the timely review of site-specific evaluation reports prior to their being considered by the home regional commission so as to provide any comments it believes should be taken into consideration as the institution's case is reviewed.

F. The policy of confidentiality for team recommendations of the home region will apply.

Procedures for Decisions and Notification

A. The home region's decision-making processes will ensure that the institution has the opportunity to respond to the team report and any comments from the host region before a final decision is made.

B. The home region takes the final accrediting action and is responsible for providing notification of that action to all relevant parties, including the host region.

C. When the final action differs from the recommendation and comments of the host region, if any, a rationale for the action will be sent upon request by the home to the host region.

D. The home region is responsible for addressing any misrepresentation of the interregional evaluation on the institution's accreditation status.

POLICY STATEMENT ON SEPARATELY ACCREDITABLE INSTITUTIONS

In an effort to be consistent and equitable to all institutions, the following criteria for identifying separately accreditable institutions will be applied by each of the regional accrediting commissions.

An instructional site located in a region other than that of its home campus must seek separate accreditation in the region it exists if it functions independent of operational control of the parent college or university. An instructional site will be deemed operationally independent and accreditable by the host region when it meets these criteria:

The instructional site:

1. has, under board policy, substantial financial and administrative independence from the home institution including matters related to personnel;
2. has a full time chief administrative officer;
3. is empowered, under board policy, to initiate and sustain its own academic programs;
4. has degree-granting authority in the state or jurisdiction in which it is located.

Each regional commission, upon the adoption of this policy, will determine if any of its affiliated institutions have instructional sites that appear to be separately accreditable. Following consultation with the host commission and the institution, and upon learning from the host region the site's potential to meet its eligibility requirements, the home region will make the determination as to the status of such sites that meet these criteria. The host region agrees to take deliberate steps toward reviewing any instructional sites identified as operationally independent in keeping with its policies and procedures for applying institutions. An institution identified as separately accreditable will continue to be included in the accreditation of the parent college or university until it achieves separate accreditation.

Off-campus instructional sites, regardless of location, not found to be operationally independent are included in the accreditation of the home campus. The operational independence of such sites is periodically reviewed under this policy.

POLICY STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN INSTITUTIONAL ADVERTISING, STUDENT RECRUITMENT, AND REPRESENTATION OF ACCREDITED STATUS

All accredited postsecondary institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and responsibility in advertising, student recruitment, and representation of accredited status. Responsible self-regulation requires rigorous attention to "Principles of Good Practice."

I. Advertising, Publications, Promotional Literature

1. Educational programs and services offered should be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities.

2. All statements and representations should be clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information should be kept on file and readily available for review.

3. Catalogs and other official publications should be readily available and accurately depict:

    a. Institutional purposes and objectives.

    b. Entrance requirements and procedures.

    c. Basic information on programs and courses, with required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated.

    d. Degree and program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain a degree or certification of completion.

    e. Faculty (full-time and part-time listed separately) with degrees held and the conferring institution.

    f. Institutional facilities readily available for educational use.

    g. Rules and regulations for conduct.

    h. Tuition, fees, and other program costs.

    i. Opportunities and requirements for financial aid.

    j. Policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment.[1]

4. In college catalogs and/or official publications describing career opportunities, clear and accurate information should be provided on:

  a. National and/or state legal requirements for eligibility for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered.

  b. Any unique requirements for career paths, or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described.

II. Student Recruitment for Admissions[2]

1. Student recruitment should be conducted by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution are clearly specified.

2. Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes shall be governed by the same principles as institutional admissions officers and volunteers.

3. The following practices in student recruitment are to be scrupulously avoided:

   a. Assuring employment unless employment arrangements have been made and can be verified.

   b. Misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates.

   c. Misrepresenting program costs.

   d. Misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended program.

   e. Offering to agencies or individual persons money or inducements other than educational services of the institution in exchange for student enrollment.

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[1] See ACE Guidelines #1: "Policy Guidelines for Refund of Student Charges"

[2] See ACE Guidelines #2: "Joint Statement of Principles of Good Practice in College Admissions and Recruitment"

> (Except for awards of privately endowed restricted funds, grants or scholarships are to be offered only on the basis of specific criteria related to merit or financial need.)

III. Representation of Accredited Status

1. The term "accreditation" is to be used only when accredited status is conferred by an accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and/or the U.S. Secretary of Education.

2. No statement should be made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by the accrediting body. Statements like the following are not permissible; "(Name of

institution) has applied for candidacy with the Commission on
Colleges of the __________________ Association"; "The
____________________ program is being evaluated by the National
Association of _____________, and it is anticipated that accreditation will be granted in the
near future."

3. Any reference to state approval should be limited to a brief statement concerning the actual charter, incorporation, license, or registration given.

4. The phrase "fully accredited" should be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible.

5. When accredited status is affirmed in institutional catalogs and other official publications, it should be stated accurately and fully in a comprehensive statement, including:

   a. identifying the accrediting body by name.

   b. indicating the scope of accreditation as:

      (1) institutional (regional or national).

      Example:

      The University of Southern Yukon is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Northwest Association, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (and/or the U.S. Department of Education).

      (2) programmatic (curriculum or unit accredited must be specified).

      Examples:

      Programs in (Civil Engineering and Aeronautical Engineering) are accredited by the Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology, a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (and/or the U.S. Department of Education).

      The Department of Music at the University of Hiawatha is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music, a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (and/or the U.S. Department of Education).

      Programs for the preparation of elementary, secondary, and special education teachers at the bachelor's and master's level, for the preparation of guidance counselors at the master's and specialist degree level, and for school superintendents at the specialist and doctoral degree level are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (and/or the U.S. Department of Education).

6. The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented.

   a. The accreditation granted by an institutional accrediting body has reference to the quality of the institution as a whole. Since institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program in the institution, statements like ``this program is accredited," or ``this degree is accredited," are incorrect and misleading.

   b. ``Free-standing" institutions offering programs in a single field, *e.g.*, a school of art, engineering, theology, granted accreditation by a regional or national institutional accrediting body alone, should clearly state that this accreditation does not imply specialized accreditation of the program offered.

Member agencies of CORPA should assume responsibility for informing the CORPA office of improper or misleading advertising or unethical practices which come to their attention, so that CORPA may inform the appropriate accrediting association or associations.

Adopted by the COPA Board
April 20, 1983

Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

REPRESENTATION OF ACCREDITED STATUS

(Revised and Adopted June 1998, Revised January 1999)

The following statements govern representations which can be made by an institution during three types of accreditation status. In addition, institutions on probation, show cause, or termination status must disclose that information to students and prospective students and in any publication where the institution makes reference to its accredited status.

A. Representation of status by institutions preparing, submitting, or completing Eligibility Reviews

An institution which is preparing, has submitted, or completed an Eligibility Review has no formal relationship with the Commission. An institution that has completed an Eligibility Review may not make any representation which claims or implies any relationship with the Accrediting Commission.

During the period in which the college prepares its self study, the institution does not have a publicly recognized relationship with the Accrediting Commission and cannot represent itself to current or prospective students, the public, governmental agencies, other accrediting bodies, or any other parties as having an affiliated status with the Commission.

No formal or informal statements should be made about possible future accreditation, status, or qualification which is not yet conferred by the Commission.

Representations should be limited to the following statement:

> At its (date of meeting), the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges reviewed and accepted the Eligibility Report submitted by (name of institution). Under Commission rules, acceptance of an Eligibility Report does not establish a formal relationship between the Commission and the college. Inquiries about accreditation should be made to the Commission office: ACCJC/WASC, 3402 Mendocino Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403, (707) 569-9177.

B. Representation of status by candidate institutions

Institutions who have achieved candidacy status should use the following language in public representations about their relationship with the Accrediting Commission. Note that both paragraphs are required.

> (Name of institution) is a candidate for accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 3402 Mendocino Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403, (707) 569-9177, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education.

> Candidate for Accreditation is a status of preliminary affiliation with the Commission initially awarded for up to two years. Candidacy is not accreditation and does not assure eventual accreditation.

C. Representation of status by accredited institutions

Representations of accredited status should be limited to the following statement. Additional modifiers such as Afully accredited@ are not appropriate since no partial accreditation is possible.

> (Name of institution) is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 3402 Mendocino Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403, (707) 569-9177, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education.

POLICY ON DISTANCE LEARNING, INCLUDING ELECTRONICALLY-MEDIATED LEARNING

(Adopted June 2001)

BACKGROUND

Recognizing that most institutions must make use of the growing range of systems for delivery of instruction, including various electronic means, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) has adopted a policy based on principles of good practice to help assure that distance learning is characterized by the same concerns for quality, integrity, and effectiveness that apply to more traditional modes of instruction.

As methods used to facilitate/conduct distance learning evolve, the ACCJC policies that address distance learning also change. This policy statement has drawn from several previous policies and is intended to replace those policies with a single, unified, and up-to-date statement. Further development of this policy may well be appropriate in the not-so-distant future.

Definition of Distance Learning

Distance learning is defined, for the purposes of accreditation review, as a formal interaction designed for learning in which any portion of the interaction occurs when the student is separated by location from the instructor, resources used to support learning, or other students. Distance learning may employ correspondence study, audio, video, or computer technologies. Educational interactions delivered through these means may occur on campus as well as off campus. These interactions may be synchronous or asynchronous.

POLICY STATEMENT

ACCJC policy specifies that all learning opportunities provided by our accredited institutions have the same quality, accountability, and focus on student outcomes, whether they are delivered electronically or by more traditional means. The intent of the policy is to provide a framework that allows institutions the flexibility to adapt their delivery modes to the emerging needs of students and society while maintaining quality. Any institution offering courses and programs electronically is expected to meet the requirements of accreditation in each of its courses and programs and at each of its sites.

Principles

- Development, implementation, and evaluation of all courses and programs, including those offered electronically, must take place within the institution's total educational mission.

- Institutions are expected to control development, implementation, and evaluation of all courses and programs offered in their names, including those offered electronically.
- Institutions are expected to have clearly defined and appropriate educational objectives for students in all courses and programs, including those delivered through electronic means.

- Institutions are expected to provide the resources and structure needed to accomplish these objectives.

- Institutions are expected to demonstrate that their students meet these objectives through application of rigorous outcome measures.

- Institutions are expected to provide the ACCJC reasons to believe that these objectives will continue to be accomplished.

- Institutions are expected to give ACCJC advance notice, through the Substantive Change process, of intent to initiate a new delivery mode, such as electronically-delivered courses.

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Curriculum and Instruction

- Each electronically-delivered course or program of study results in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the course credit, degree, or certificate awarded.
- A degree or certificate program delivered partially or entirely through electronic means is coherent and complete and results in learning outcomes comparable to those delivered through other means.
- Student experiences result in achievement of intended learning outcomes whether electronically-delivered courses provide for synchronous or asynchronous interaction between faculty and students and among students.
- Portions of courses delivered through electronic means adhere to the same principles as courses delivered entirely through these means.

Institutional Context and Commitment

Role and Mission

- Delivery of courses and programs through electronic means is consistent with the institution's role and mission.
- Review and approval processes ensure the appropriateness of electronic delivery to meeting the course and program objectives.
- Specific needs of students for whom electronically delivered courses are intended are identified and addressed.

Learning Resources

- Appropriate learning resources are available to students who take electronically delivered courses.

Students and Student Services

- Students receive clear, complete, and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, assumptions about technological competence and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services and financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.

- Enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their learning and assess their progress.
- Students have the background, knowledge, and technical skills needed to successfully use the technology involved in their course work.
- Advertising, recruiting, and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the courses and programs, and the services available.

Commitment to Support

- The institution demonstrates a commitment to ongoing program support, both financial and technical, and to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable students to complete a degree/certificate.
- The institution ensures that qualified faculty provide appropriate oversight of courses delivered electronically.
- The institution gives appropriate consideration to the technical skills and needs of faculty assigned to teach through electronic means.
- The faculty evaluation process provides a means to evaluate technical skills when appropriate.
- The institution provides faculty training and support services specifically related to teaching via electronic means.

Evaluation and Assessment

- The institution evaluates the educational effectiveness of electronically-delivered course work, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction. Students have access to such evaluation data.
- The institution provides for assessment of student achievement in each course and at completion of a program.

QUESTIONS TO AID DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF STUDY

An institution offering courses through electronic or other modes of distance delivery is expected to meet ACCJC standards and policies. The questions below are provided to assist institutions in undertaking discussions as part of self study development. Evaluation teams will similarly use them in validating the Self Study.

Curriculum and Instruction

What means does the institution have to ensure that courses intended for electronic or other modes of distance delivery are developed through a process similar to traditionally-delivered courses?

How does the institution ensure that courses and programs provide for timely and effective interaction between students and faculty?

How does the institution ensure that courses and programs provide for effective interaction among students?

How does the institution ensure that faculty have responsibility for and exercise oversight of electronically-delivered courses and programs, ensuring both the rigor of those courses and programs and the quality of instruction?

How does the institution ensure that the technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the courses and programs?

How does the institution ensure the currency of materials, courses, and programs?

How clear and effective are the institution's distance learning policies concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products?

How does the institution ensure that appropriate faculty support services specifically related to distance learning are provided?

How does the institution provide effective training for faculty who teach using electronic means?

Evaluation and Assessment

How does the institution assess student capability to succeed in electronically delivered courses and programs? How is this information applied to admission and recruiting? How effective is this assessment?

How does the institution evaluate the educational effectiveness of its electronically-delivered courses and programs (including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction) to ensure comparability to traditionally-delivered courses and programs?

How does the institution ensure the integrity of student work and the credibility of the degrees and credit it awards?

Library and Learning Resources

How does the institution ensure that students have access to and can effectively use appropriate information resources?

How does the institution monitor whether students make appropriate use of learning resources?

How does the institution provide laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs?

Student Services

How does the institution provide adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support the programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, and placement, and counseling?

How does the institution provide an adequate means for resolving student complaints?

What advertising, recruiting, and admissions information does the institution provide to students that adequately and accurately represents the programs, requirements, and services available?

How does the institution ensure that students admitted possess the knowledge and equipment necessary to use the technology employed in the course or program?

How does the institution provide assistance to students who are experiencing difficulty using the required technology?

Facilities and Finances

How does the institution ensure that equipment and maintenance required for electronically-delivered courses and programs are provided effectively?

How are facilities, staffing, equipment, and other resources associated with the viability and effectiveness of the electronically-delivered courses and programs reflected in the institution's long-range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes?

GLOSSARY

electronically-mediated learning	Formal interaction designed for learning in which any portion of the interaction is conducted through electronic means. Some examples are: One-way audio (tapes, radio); Two-way audio (phone, voice mail, tapes); One-way video (canned telecourses); Two-way video (interactive telecourses); One-way Internet (website viewing); Two-way Internet (website, e-mail, chat); A combination of any of the above means; Combination of any of the above means with traditional instructional mode
learning opportunity	student interactions with instructors, learning

	resources, or other students
program	set of coherent courses and other learning experiences leading to a defined learning outcome
traditional mode of instruction	classroom-based, face-to-face learning

POLICY STATEMENT ON CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CLOSING A POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

I. Preparing the Way

A decision to close an educational institution requires thoughtful planning and careful consultation with all affected constituencies. Every effort should be devoted to informing each constituency as fully as possible about the conditions requiring consideration of a decision of such importance, and all available information should be shared. Before closing, such alternatives as merging with another institution, forming a consortium, or participating in extensive inter-institutional sharing and cooperation should be carefully considered. As much as possible, the determination to close an institution should involve a consultative process, but responsibility for the final decision to close rests with the board of governors.

Tradition and sentiment are important considerations, but sentimentality should not be allowed to determine events. A decision to close should never be made or reversed simply on the basis of fears, hopes, or aspirations that have little relation to reality. Neither should it be delayed to the point where the institution has lost its viability and its educational program no longer retains quality and integrity. Since the immediate interests of current students and faculty are most directly affected, their present and future prospects require especially sensitive attention and involvement.

It is assumed that closing an institution means a decision permanently to discontinue its educational activities, not merely to suspend them for an indefinite period in the hope that circumstances may someday permit their resumption. But it should be noted that most institutions of higher education are corporations established under the provisions of state law, and as such may have legal responsibilities (holding title to real property, for example) that may necessitate the continued existence of the corporation after the educational activities of the institution have been terminated. Indeed, it is probable that such continued corporate existence, at least for a time, will prove to be the usual situation. It is unlikely that in most cases corporate existence and educational activities can be terminated simultaneously.

II. Closing an Institution

A decision to close requires specific plans for providing in appropriate ways for the students, the faculty, the administrative and support staff, and for the disposition of the institution's assets. Many considerations bear upon closing an educational institution, and each situation will be unique. Public institutions, seminaries, church-related colleges--the nature and sponsorship of each institution require different emphasis and pose particular conditions to be met in reaching and carrying out the ultimate decision. Nevertheless, general guidelines may be helpful to each institution considering closing.

This statement makes only incidental reference to such corporate responsibilities and always in the educational context. It is imperative, therefore, that a Board of Trustees considering closing an institution under its care should be guided not only by guidelines such as these and by the state educational authorities, but also by advice of legal counsel. Special counsel to advise with respect to problems of closing may be desirable for the institution. Institutional and specialized accrediting bodies should also be consulted and be kept fully apprised of developments.

A. The Students

Students who have not completed their degrees should be provided for according to their academic needs. Arrangements for transfer to other institutions will require complete academic records and all other related information gathered in dossiers which can be transmitted promptly to receiving institutions. Agreements made with other institutions to receive transferring students and to accept their records must be submitted to the Accrediting Commission for approval. Where financial aid is concerned, particularly federal or state grants, arrangements should be made with the appropriate agencies to transfer the grants to the receiving institutions. Where such arrangements cannot be completed, students should be fully informed. In cases where students have held institutional scholarships or grants and there are available funds which can legally be used to support students while completing degrees at other institutions, appropriate agreements should be negotiated.

B. Academic Records and Financial Aid Transcripts

All academic, financial aid information, and other records should be prepared for permanent filing, including microfilming. Arrangements should be made with the state department of higher education or other appropriate agency for filing of student records. If there is no state educational agency which can receive records, arrangements should be made with another college or university or with the state archives to preserve the records. Notification should be sent to every current and past student indicating where the records are being stored and what the accessibility to those records will be. Where possible, a copy of a student's record should also be forwarded to the individual student.

C. Completion of Institutional Obligations

When a student chooses to continue at another institution but is within a year to 18 months of completing an academic degree in the closing institution, arrangements may be made to permit that student to complete the requirements for a degree elsewhere but to receive it from the closed institution. This may require special action by the appropriate state agency. Such arrangements should also include provision for continuation of the institution's accreditation only for this purpose by the accrediting agency involved. These steps normally require the institution to continue as a legal corporate entity for 12 to 18 months beyond the closing date, but any such arrangement must be established in careful consultation with the appropriate authorities and with their written consent.

D. Provision for Faculty and Staff

In every possible case, the institution should arrange for continuation of those faculty and staff who will be necessary for the completion of the institution's work up to the closing date. When faculty and staff are no longer needed, the institution should make every effort to assist them in finding alternative employment. It should be understood that the institution can make no guarantees, but genuinely good faith efforts to assist in relocation and reassignment are essential. In the event that faculty or staff members find new positions, early resignations should be accepted.

III. The Final determination

Determinations must be made to allocate whatever financial resources and assets remain after the basic needs of current students, faculty, and staff are provided for. When the financial resources of the institution are inadequate to honor commitments, the Board should investigate what alternatives and protection are available under applicable bankruptcy laws before deciding to close. If funds are insufficient to maintain normal operations through the end of the closing process, the institution should not overlook the possibility of soliciting one-time gifts and donations to assist in fulfilling its final obligations.

Every effort should be made to develop publicly defensible policies for dividing the resources equitably among those with claims against the institution. One of the best ways of achieving this goal is to involve potential claimants in the process of developing the policies. Time and effort devoted to carrying the process to a judicious conclusion may considerably reduce the likelihood of lawsuits or other forms of confrontation.

It is impossible to anticipate in advance the many claims that might be made against remaining resources of an institution, but the following three principles may help to sort out possible claims and to set priorities:

(a) Students have the right to expect basic minimal services during the final semester, not only in the academic division, but also in the business office, financial aid office, registrar's office, counseling, and other essential support services. Staff should be retained long enough to provide these services. It may be appropriate to offer special incentives to keep key personnel present.

(b) Reasonable notice is given to all employees, explaining the possibility of early termination of contracts and that the reasons for retaining some personnel longer than others are based on satisfying the minimal needs of students and the legal requirements for closing.

(c) Every effort should be made to honor long-term financial obligations (loans, debentures, etc.) even though the parties holding such claims may choose not to press them.

IV. The Closing Date

The Board of Trustees should take a formal vote to terminate the institution on a specified date. That date will depend on a number of factors including the decision to file or not to file for bankruptcy. Another key factor is whether or not all obligations to students will have been satisfactorily discharged. This is particularly important if the decision is made to allow seniors in their final year to graduate from the institution by completing their degree requirements elsewhere. If such arrangements are made, the Board must be sure to take the legal action necessary to permit awarding degrees after the institution otherwise ceases to function. Normally, formal vote to award a degree is made after all requirements have been met, but it is legally possible to make arrangements for a student to complete the requirements for a degree at another institution and to receive the degree from the closed institution. These requirements must be clearly specified along with a deadline for completion. Also the Board must identify the person or persons authorized to determine whether or not these requirements have in fact been satisfied. Arrangements must be completed with the appropriate state and accrediting agencies in advance in order to assure that the degree is awarded by a legally authorized and accredited institution.

V. Disposition of Assets

In the case of a not-for-profit institution, the legal requirements of the state and the federal government must be carefully examined with respect to the disposition of institutional assets. Arrangements for the sale of the physical plant, equipment, the library, special collections, art, or other funds must be explored with legal counsel. In the case of wills, endowments, or special grants, the institution should discuss with the donors, grantors, executors of estates, and other providers of special funds arrangements to accommodate their wishes. State laws regarding the disposition of funds from a nonprofit institution must be meticulously followed. All concerned federal and state agencies need to be apprised of the institution's situation and any obligations relating to estate or federal funds need to be cleared with the proper agencies.

VI. Other Considerations

The institution should establish a clear understanding with its creditors and all other agencies involved with its activities to assure that their claims and interests will be properly processed. Insofar as possible, the institution should assure that its final arrangements will not be subject to later legal proceedings which might jeopardize the records or status of its students or faculty.

VII. Conclusion

The closing of an educational institution is never a happy event. Nevertheless, such action can be rendered less traumatic by careful attention to the details of the legal and moral obligations of the institution. Closing will be marked by sadness, but well-planned and conscientious efforts to assure that the institution's students, faculty, and staff will be optimally provided for and that its assets will be used in ways that will honor the intentions of the original donors should help in avoiding bitterness and rancor. A final report on the closing should be submitted to the appropriate accrediting and state agencies for their records.

Note: The most recent and comprehensive reference work, which includes summaries of state regulations regarding disposition of student records and dissolution of non-profit colleges and universities is the following:

O'Neill, Joseph P. and Barnett, Samuel. College and Corporate Change: Merger, Bankruptcy, and Closure. Princeton, N.J., Conference University Press, 1980.

Adopted by the COPA Board
April 15, 1982

Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

JOINT POLICY STATEMENT ON TRANSFER AND AWARD OF ACADEMIC CREDIT

Council on Postsecondary Accreditation : American Council on Education/ Commission on Educational Credit : American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

This statement is directed to institutions of postsecondary education and others concerned with the transfer of academic credit among institutions and award of academic credit for extra-institutional learning. Basic to this statement is the principle that each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit. Institutions are encouraged to review their policies and practices periodically to assure that they accomplish the institution's objectives and that they function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. Any statements, this one or others referred to, should be used as guides, not as substitutes, for institutional policies and practices.

Transfer of credit is a concept that now involves transfer between dissimilar institutions and curricula and recognition of extra-institutional learning, as well as transfer between institutions and curricula of similar characteristics. As their personal circumstances and educational objectives change, students seek to have their learning, wherever and however attained, recognized by institutions where they enroll for further study. It is important for reasons of social equity and educational effectiveness, as well as the wise use of resources, for all institutions to develop reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for acceptance of transfer credit. Such policies and procedures should provide maximum consideration for the individual student who has changed institutions or objectives. It is the receiving institution's responsibility to provide reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for determining a student's knowledge in required subject areas. All institutions have a responsibility to furnish transcripts and other documents necessary for a receiving institution to judge the quality and quantity of the work. Institutions also have a responsibility to advise the students that the work reflected on the transcript may or may not be accepted by a receiving institution.

Inter-institutional Transfer of Credit

Transfer of credit from one institution to another involves at least the following three considerations:

1. The educational quality of the institution from which the student transfers.

2. The comparability of the nature, content, and level of credit earned to that offered by the receiving institution.

3. The appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned to the programs offered by the receiving institution, in light of the student's educational goals.

Accredited Institutions

Accreditation speaks primarily to the first of these considerations, serving as the basic indicator that an institution meets certain minimum standards. Users of accreditation are urged to give careful attention to the accreditation conferred by accrediting bodies recognized by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). COPA has a formal process of recognition which requires that any accrediting body so recognized must meet the same standards. Under these standards, COPA has recognized a number of accrediting bodies, including:

1. Regional accrediting commissions (which historically accredited the more traditional colleges and universities but which now accredit proprietary, vocational-technical, and single-purpose institutions as well).

2. National accrediting bodies that accredit various kinds of specialized institution.

3. Certain professional organizations that accredit free-standing professional schools, in addition to programs within multi-purpose institutions. (COPA annually publishes a list of recognized accrediting bodies, as well as a directory of institutions accredited by these organizations.)

Although accrediting agencies vary in the ways they are organized and in their statements of scope and mission, all accrediting bodies that meet COPA's standards for recognition function to assure that the institutions or programs they accredit have met generally accepted minimum standards for accreditation.

Comparability and Applicability

Comparability of the nature, content, and level of transfer credit and the appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned to programs offered by the receiving institution are as important in the evaluation process as the accreditation status of the institution at which the transfer credit was awarded. Since accreditation does not address these questions, this information must be obtained from catalogues and other materials and from direct contact between knowledgeable and experienced faculty and staff at both the receiving and sending institutions. When such considerations as comparability and appropriateness of credit are satisfied, however, the receiving institution should have reasonable confidence that students from accredited institutions are qualified to undertake the receiving institution's educational program.

Accreditation affords reason for confidence in an institution's or a program's purposes, in the appropriateness of its resources and plans for carrying out these purposes, and in its effectiveness in accomplishing its goals, insofar as these things can be judged. Accreditation speaks to the probability, but does not guarantee, that students have met acceptable standards of educational accomplishment.

Admissions and Degree Purposes

At some institutions there may be differences between the acceptance of credit for admission purposes and the applicability of credit for degree purposes. A receiving institution may accept previous work, place credit value on it, and enter it on the transcript. However, that previous work, because of its nature and not its inherent quality, may be determined to have no applicability to a specific degree to be pursued by the student.

Institutions have a responsibility to make this distinction, and its implications, clear to students before they decide to enroll. This should be a matter of full disclosure, with the best interests of the student in mind. Institutions also should make every reasonable effort to reduce the gap between credits accepted and credits applied toward an educational credential.

Unaccredited Institutions

Institutions of postsecondary education that are not accredited by COPA-recognized accredited bodies may lack that status for reasons unrelated to questions of quality. Such institutions, however, cannot provide a reliable, third-party assurance that they meet or exceed minimum standards. That being the case, students transferring from such institutions may encounter special problems in gaining acceptance and transferring credits to accredited institutions. Institutions admitting students from unaccredited institutions should take special steps to validate credits previously earned.

Foreign Institutions

In most cases, foreign institutions are chartered and authorized by their national governments, usually through a ministry of education. Although this provides for a standardization within a country, it does not produce useful information about comparability from one country to another. No other nation has a system comparable to voluntary accreditation. The Division of Higher Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is engaged in a project to develop international compacts for the acceptance of educational credentials. At the operational level, four organizations--the Council on International Exchange (CIEE), the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Student Credentials (CEC), the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA), and the National Liaison Committee on Foreign Student Admissions (NLC) -- often can assist institutions by distributing general guidelines on admission and placement of foreign students. Equivalency or placement recommendations are to be evaluated in terms of the programs and policies of the individual receiving institutions.

Validation of Extra-institutional and Experiential Learning for Transfer Purposes

Transfer-of-credit policies should encompass educational accomplishment attained in extra-institutional settings as well as at accredited postsecondary institutions. In deciding on the award of credit for extra-institutional learning, institutions will find the services of the American Council on Education's Office of Educational Credit helpful. One of the Office's functions is to operate and foster programs to determine credit equivalencies for various modes of extra-institutional learning. The Office maintains evaluation programs for formally structured courses offered by the military, and civilian non-collegiate sponsors such as businesses, corporations, government agencies, and labor unions. Evaluation services are also available for examination programs, for occupations with validated job proficiency evaluation systems, and for correspondence courses offered by schools accredited by the National Home Study Council. The results are published in a Guide series. Another resource is the General Education Development (GED) Testing Program, which provides a means for assessing high school equivalency.

For learning that has not been validated through the ACE formal credit recommendation process or through credit-by examination programs, institutions are urged to explore the Council for Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL) procedures and processes. Pertinent CAEL publications designed for this purpose are also listed.

Uses of this Statement

This statement has been endorsed by the three national associations most concerned with practices in the area of transfer and award of credit: the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the American Council on Education/Commission on Educational Credit, and the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation.

Institutions are encouraged to use this statement as a basis for discussions in developing or reviewing institutional policies with regard to transfer. If the statement reflects an institution's policies, that institution might want to use this publication to inform faculty, staff, and students.

It is recommended that accrediting bodies reflect the essential precepts of this statement in their criteria.

Adopted by the COPA Board October 10, 1978; Approved by the American Council on Education/Commission on Educational Credit , December 5, 1978

Approved by the Executive Committee, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, November 21, 1978 Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

SELF-REGULATION INITIATIVES: GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

POLICY GUIDELINES FOR REFUND OF STUDENT CHARGES

Background

National attention has for some time focused on the matter of fair and equitable refund of student charges and fees. Since 1976, federal law has required that all institutions receiving federal student-aid funds have equitable refund policies. Within the higher education community the belief has grown that policy guidelines for voluntary self-regulation, developed by higher education representatives, are preferable to governmental definitions and regulations. To this end, the American Council on Education and other associations urged the National Association of College and University Business Officers to prepare policy guidelines for refunding student fees.

The guidelines were drafted by NACUBO's Student-Related Programs Committee and were reviewed by persons representing a wide range of institutions and professional responsibilities. Associations that have approved the guidelines are listed below. The guidelines have gained acceptance by officials in the U.S. Office of Education. Leo Kornfeld, Deputy Commissioner for Student Financial Assistance, lauded the effort as important progress toward self-regulation and indicated that, as a result, the USOE will not proceed with developing regulations for tuition refund policies of colleges and universities.

The guidelines summarize elements of fair and equitable policy in refunding tuition, room, board, and other charges for students who withdraw from their studies or otherwise discontinue their use of an institution's services before the end of an academic term. They offer a balanced approach to issues related to refunds, including the financial commitments incurred by the institution and the responsibility to treat both withdrawing and continuing students fairly. Overall, they allow institutions to ensure that their students' rights to fair and equitable treatment are fully recognized.

Colleges and universities are urged to use the guidelines to evaluate and, where necessary, modify current institutional policies and practices to meet the spirit and intent of the guidelines.

GUIDELINE ONE. **The governing board of the institution should review and approve the schedule of all institutional charges and refund policies applicable to students**. The pricing of services and refund policies have important consequences to students, parents, the institution, and society; as such, pricing and refund policies should receive board attention and approval.

GUIDELINE TWO. **Institutions should seek consumer views in the process of establishing and amending charge and refund structures.** Decisions regarding institutional funds are ultimately the sole responsibility of the institution's legally-designated fund custodians. However, consumer concerns do affect decision making, and involving consumers in decision making related to charges and refunds is a desirable approach for assessing student needs and creating public awareness of institutional requirements.

GUIDELINE THREE. **Institutions should publish a current schedule of all student charges, a statement of the purpose for such charges, and related refund policies, and have them readily available free of charge to current and prospective students.** Students and parents have a right to know what charges they will be expected to pay and what will or will not be refunded. They also have a right to know what services accompany payment of the charges. Informational materials published free for students and prospective students are ideal for this purpose.

GUIDELINE FOUR. **Institutions should clearly designate all optional charges as ``optional" in all published schedules and related materials. Clearly, charges that are mandatory and charges that are optional must be plainly differentiated in all printed materials.** Also, the institution should state clearly in its schedule if a charge is optional for some students but required for others. Statements accompanying the schedule may include institutional endorsements of the optional program or service.

GUIDELINE FIVE. **Institutions should clearly identify charges and deposits that are nonrefundable as ``nonrefundable" on all published schedules.** Institutions determine on an individual basis which of their charges are refundable or nonrefundable. In general, admissions fees, application fees, laboratory fees, facility and student activity fees, and other similar charges are not refundable. Such fees are generally charged to cover the costs of activities such as processing applications and other student information, reserving academic positions, and establishing the limits of institutional programs and services, reserving housing space, and otherwise setting the fixed costs of the institution for the coming academic period.

Institutions determine on an individual basis which of their deposits are refundable or nonrefundable. Some deposits will be nonrefundable or will be credited to a student's account (*e.g.*, tuition deposits). Others are refundable according to the terms of the deposit agreement (*e.g.*, deposits for breakage).

GUIDELINE SIX. **Institutions should refund housing rental charges, less a deposit, so long as written notification of cancellation is made prior to a well-publicized date that provides reasonable opportunity to make the space available to other students.** Written notification on or before the beginning of the term of the contract is necessary to ensure utilization of housing units. During the term of the contract, room charges are generally not refundable. However, based on the program offered, space availability, debt service requirements, state and local laws, and other individual circumstances, institutions may provide for some more flexible refund guideline for housing.

GUIDELINE SEVEN. **Institutions should refund board charges in full, less a deposit, if written notification of cancellation is made prior to a well-publicized date that falls on or before the beginning of the term of the contract. Subsequent board charges should be refunded on a *pro rata* basis less a withdrawal fee**. It is Reasonable to make a refund for those goods and services not consumed. The withdrawal charge should reflect that portion of an institution's costs that are fixed for the term of the contract.

GUIDELINE EIGHT. **The institutional tuition refund policy for an academic period should include the following minimum guidelines:**

1. **The institution should refund 100 percent of the tuition charge, less a deposit fee, if written notification of cancellation is made prior to a well-publicized date that falls on or before the first day of classes.**

2. **The institution should refund at least 25 percent of the tuition charge if written notification of withdrawal is made during the first 25 percent of the academic period.**

It is reasonable to refund tuition charges on a sliding scale if a student withdraws from his or her program prior to the end of the first 25 percent of the academic period unless state law imposes a more restrictive refund policy.

GUIDELINE NINE. **The institution should assess no penalty charges where the institution, as opposed to the student, is in error. The institution should make refunds in cases where the institution has assessed charges in error.** Penalty charges, such as those involving late registration fees, change of scheduled fees, late payment fees, should not be assessed if it is determined that the student is not responsible for the action causing the charge to be levied.

GUIDELINE TEN. **Institutions should advise students that any notifications of withdrawal or cancellation and requests for refund must be in writing and addressed to the designated institutional officer**. A student's written notification of withdrawal or cancellation and request for a refund provides an accurate record of transactions and also ensures that such requests will be processed on a timely basis. Acceptance of oral requests is an undesirable practice.

GUIDELINE ELEVEN. **Institutions should pay or credit refunds due on a timely basis.** The definition of ``timely basis" should include the time required to process a formal student request for refund, to process a check if required, and to allow for mail delivery, when necessary. If an institution has a policy that a refund of an inconsequential amount will not be made, such policy should be published as part of all materials related to refund policies.

GUIDELINE TWELVE. **Institutions should publicize, as a part of their dissemination of information on charges and refunds, that an appeals process exists for students or parents who feel that individual circumstances warrant exceptions from published policy. The informational materials should include the name, title, and address of the official responsible**. Although charges and refund policies should reflect extensive consideration of student and institutional needs, it will not be possible to encompass in these structures the variety of personal circumstances that may exist or develop. Institutions are required to provide a system of due process to their students, and charges and refund policies are legitimately a part of that process. Students and parents should be informed regularly of procedures for requesting information concerning exceptions to published policies.

American Council on Education
August 1979

Reviewed by ACCJC 1990, 1996

OPERATIONAL POLICIES

Operational Policies adopted by WASC and the Commission apply to the organization of the Commission and the conduct of its business.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENERAL AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

(Adopted October 1964, Revised January 1978)

Each institution must be free to decide for itself whether or not to seek accreditation by any particular agency. If an institution desires both general (regional) accreditation and specialized program accreditation, the Commission may collaborate with the specialized accrediting agency in arranging joint visitations or exchange of information.

An institution should not interpret its general accreditation as validating a specialized program in the same manner as specialized accreditation, which by its very nature is a more intensive evaluation process.

A specialized institution may apply for regional accreditation through ACCJC if it meets the Commission's eligibility requirements.

Reviewed by ACCJC 1996

RELATIONS WITH ACCREDITING AGENCIES

(Adopted January 1998, Revised June 1998)

It is the policy of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges to maintain a working relationship with other accrediting agencies where a community of interest exists. Elements of the relationship shall include, but not be limited to:

Active participation in meetings of executive staff and Commission leadership

Routine open sharing of publications and policy documents

Timely submission of information on accrediting decisions taken at Commission meetings

Cooperating in the evaluation of institutions that operate in more than one accrediting association region

Recommending persons for evaluation team and Commission service, and receiving such recommendations from other agencies

Participation in common ventures of policy development and advocacy for institutional accreditation

Systematically monitoring the status of ACCJC/WASC institutions with other accrediting agencies

Consideration of actions taken by other recognized agencies when undertaking actions of initial candidacy or accreditation, or renewal of candidacy or accreditation of institutions that may be accredited by those other agencies

Handling and forwarding of dues collected from member institutions on behalf of national affiliates such as the Council for Higher Education Accreditation

Upon receipt of information regarding interim or final adverse actions against a member institution by another recognized accrediting agency (or state agency), Commission staff will seek further information from the agency involved, and the Commission shall determine whether a review of the accredited status of the institution will be required.

The Commission will not renew the accreditation or preaccreditation of any institution during a period that the institution is the subject of an interim action by a recognized institutional accreditation agency potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, or termination of the institution=s accreditation or preaccreditation, or the institution has been notified of a threatened loss of accreditation and the due process procedures required by the action have not been completed. ['602.30(a)(1)(ii)(A) and (C)]. If the Commission grants accreditation or preaccreditation notwithstanding these actions, the Commission will provide to the U.S. Secretary a thorough explanation consistent with its accreditation standards, why the previous action does not preclude the agency=s grant of accreditation or preaccreditation '602.30(a)(1)(iv).

In the event that the Commission grants initial accreditation, reaffirmation, or candidacy to an institution that is subject to adverse action by another recognized institutional accrediting agency, the bases for the decision will be explained and communicated to that agency and to the Secretary of Education as appropriate to each case.

The Commission is affiliated with other regional agencies through the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. It should be noted that the Commission has been an active participant in the community of accrediting agencies since the establishment of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, first with the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions in Higher Education (FRACHE), then the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) and the Commission on Recognition in Higher Education Accreditation (CORPA) and the National Policy Board on Higher Education Accreditation.

The primary community of interest is clearly with the other regional institutional accrediting agencies. The Commission shares significant concerns with national agencies that accredit institutions, and to a lesser extent, with specialized accreditors. (Note policy, ARelationship Between General and Specialized Agencies.@)

The Commission will not renew the accreditation or preaccreditation of any institution that is the subject of an interim action by a recognized institutional accrediting agency potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, or termination of the institution=s accreditation or preaccreditation, or the Commission has been notified of a threatened loss of accreditation and the due process procedures required by the action have not been completed. '602.30(a)(1)(ii)(A) and (C). If the Commission grants accreditation or preaccreditation notwithstanding these actions, the Commission will provide to the U.S. Secretary a thorough explanation consistent with its accreditation standards, why the previous action does not preclude the agency=s grant of accreditation or preaccreditation '602.30(a)(1)(iv).

ACCESS TO COMMISSION MEETINGS

(Adopted June 1978, Revised January 2000)

The ACCJC holds meetings of the Commission for two purposes: to decide the accredited status of applicant and member institutions and to consider such organizational and policy matters as may come before it. When deliberating or acting upon matters that concern specific individuals or institutions, the Commission meets in Executive Session. When deliberating or acting upon informational, organizational, or policy matters, the Commission meets in Public Session.

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges supports and encourages the presence of members of the public at its meetings. The Commission also recognizes that it has the responsibility to consider actions on the accredited status of institutions and matters such as personnel actions in a confidential manner.

The Executive Director mails a preliminary agenda 30 days before each regular meeting of the Commission to the chief executive officer and accreditation liaison officer of all applicant, candidate, and accredited institutions with the request that the agenda be posted or otherwise publicized. The preliminary agenda is also posted on the Commission web page.

PROCEDURES FOR ACCESS TO COMMISSION MEETINGS

I. PUBLIC SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION MEETING

Observers will be seated at the public sessions of Commission meetings as space allows. Anyone wishing to make a presentation or address the Commission must give advance notice to the Executive Director as outlined below and identify the agenda item that they wish to address. No reference to specific individuals or institutions shall be made in Public Session.

Participation by observers at Commission meetings is limited to the following:

1. Statements which address the Commission=s agenda and which have been noted by the Executive Director in the agenda at the appropriate places. A written copy of all prepared remarks should be given to the Executive Director prior to the presentation. Requests to make statements should be made to the Executive Director, in writing, not less than 15 days before the Commission meeting.
2. Requests to bring items to the attention of the Commission. Such requests should be made to the Executive Director, in writing, not less than 15 days before the Commission meeting
3. Brief comments on specific points in the Public Session agenda. These may be made at the end of the Commission discussion of the same topic upon recognition from the Chair. The Chair may invite participation at other times at his/her discretion.

In all cases, observers= statements shall be limited to five minutes but may be extended at the discretion of the chair or vote of the Commission.

II. EXECUTIVE SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION

1. When the Commission is deliberating or acting upon matters that concern an institution,

it will invite the chief executive officer of the institution to meet with the Commission in Executive Session. There is no requirement that the chief executive officer attend the Commission meeting. If the Commission is considering institutional action as a result of an evaluation team visit and the chief executive officer of the institution accepts the invitation to attend, the Chair of the evaluation team or designee is also invited to attend.

Whenever possible, the Executive Director will arrange for a subcommittee of Commissioners to meet with the institutional representative preceding the Executive Session of the Commission to discuss the matters of concern. The institutional representative will be invited to make a brief presentation followed by questions by Commissioners. After the institutional representative is excused the evaluation Team Chair will be asked to respond to Commission questions. The Team Chair is then excused, and the Commission deliberations and decision are conducted in Executive Session.

2. When the Commission is deliberating or acting upon matters that concern specific individuals, the Commission meets in Executive Session. Requests to meet with members of the Commission in Executive Session should be made to the Executive Director, in writing, not less than 15 days before the Commission meeting. Whenever possible, the Executive Director will arrange for a subcommittee of Commissioners to meet with the individuals preceding the Executive Session of the Commission to discuss the matters of concern. These Commissioners will report to the Commission as a whole and may recommend a presentation before the full Commission at an appropriate time.

COORDINATING GUIDELINES FOR THE WASC POSTSECONDARY ACCREDITING COMMISSIONS

Revised July 2002

1. Commission of Jurisdiction

- For an institution which offers a combination of secondary and lower division college programs, the Commission on Schools and the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges will conduct a joint accreditation review of the institution. ACS will be responsible for accrediting secondary programs. ACCJC will be responsible for accrediting lower-division college-level programs.

- Normally, the Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities will assume jurisdiction, consulting with the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, for an institution which offers lower division programs but is adding one or more upper division baccalaureate degree programs and/or any graduate level work. However, under special circumstances, an institution which offers lower division or community college programs but is adding a single baccalaureate degree program may be eligible for joint accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities.

- ACCJC will retain jurisdiction of institutions offering the associate degree and limited upper division work which does not lead to a baccalaureate degree.

2. Evaluation and Recognition

- When an institution has been accredited or recognized as a candidate by the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges and moves to a higher level, the Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities will conduct an evaluation in cooperation with the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. The Senior Commission standards and procedures will be used by the institution and the accrediting team.

- The institution will continue to be listed under the original level. At such time as the total institution qualifies for recognition by a higher commission, it will come under that commission's jurisdiction. Generally, the institution has three years in which to effect a transfer.

CODE OF COMMISSION GOOD PRACTICE IN RELATIONS WITH MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

(Adopted June 1980, Revised June 1996, Edited October 1997, Revised January 1999, January 2001)

In its relations with the institutions it accredits, the Commission makes the commitment to:

1. Make an initial visit to, or evaluation of, an institution only on the written request of the chief executive officer of the institution;

2. Revisit an institution only on request by the chief executive, or if a visit is initiated by the Commission, after due notice to the institution;

3. Permit withdrawal of a request for initial candidacy or initial accreditation at any time (even after evaluation) prior to final action by the Commission;

4. Appraise institutions in the light of their own stated purposes so long as these are within the general frame of reference of higher education and consistent with the standards of the Commission;

5. Use the institution=s self study, the team report, and relevant qualitative and quantitative information in institutional evaluation;

6. Consider information contained in a minority report that is developed in response to either a self study or another accreditation report submitted by the institution; the minority report should be received in approximate conjunction with the self study or other accreditation report to which it pertains. The Commission will notify the institution when a minority report is received by sending a copy of the report to the institution;

7. Interpret standards for accreditation in ways that are relevant to the character of the particular institution, respecting institutional integrity and diversity;

8. Encourage sound educational innovation and assist and stimulate improvement in the educational effectiveness of the institution;

9. Publish at least twice annually in the newsletter the names of institutions scheduled for comprehensive evaluation;

10. Accept relevant third-party comment on the institutions scheduled for evaluation. Such comment must be submitted in writing, signed, accompanied by return address and telephone number, and received no later than five weeks before the scheduled Commission consideration. The Commission will notify the institution when a third-party report is received by sending a copy of the

report to the institution;

11. Establish reporting systems for annual, midterm, and self study reports which inform the Commission regarding student loan default rates and the standing of the institution with respect to appropriate state agencies, institutional or specialized accrediting agencies;

12. Consider information regarding adverse actions against a member institution by another accrediting agency or state agency and provide an explanation consistent with accreditation standards why the action by another authority does not result in an adverse action;

13. Limit oversight required by federal statute and regulations to issues expressly required by that mandate;

14. Include on evaluation teams representation from other institutions of similar purpose and academic program to the extent feasible;

15. Provide institutions an opportunity to object, for cause, to individual members assigned to the team designated to visit the institution, with special concern for possible conflict of interest;

16. Arrange consultation during the visit with administration, staff, students, and trustees, and include a publicized opportunity for an open hearing during the visit;

17. Address performance with regard to student achievement in reviews of institutional effectiveness. In addition, the team report should make clear those standards with which the institution does not comply and those areas needing improvement;

18. Provide to the institution a detailed written report on its review assessing the institution=s or program=s compliance with the Commission=s standards, including areas needing improvement, and the institution=s performance with respect to student achievement;

19. Emphasize the value and importance of institutional self study and respect the confidentiality of the institutional self study and evaluation team report. An institution, at its discretion, may make such documents public. In event of an adverse action, the Commission staff will attempt to reach agreement with the institution on a statement for public distribution, but the Commission reserves final authority in case of an impasse. Should the institution issue selective and biased releases or use the public forum to take issue with Commission actions, the Commission and its staff will be free to make all the documents public;

20. Provide opportunity for the institution to respond in writing to all types of

team reports before they are finalized, supply all final team reports to the institution before an accrediting decision is made, and provide opportunity to the institution to appear before the Commission when such reports are considered. The Commission staff will notify an institution in writing as soon as reasonably possible regarding Commission decisions;

21. Encourage discussion and use on campus of major team recommendations;

22. Revoke accreditation only after advance written notice to the institution;

23. Provide opportunity for Commission review of its adverse decisions, and in addition, for appeal of those decisions to a panel established by the WASC Board;

24. Provide an opportunity for institutional representatives and the general public to attend those portions of Commission meetings devoted to policy matters and others of a non-confidential nature;

25. Refrain from conditioning candidacy or accreditation upon payment of fees for purposes other than annual fees and evaluation costs; and

26. Encourage continuing close relationships and communication between the Commission and institutions through the establishment of liaison officer positions in each institution, with appropriate visibility and responsibility.

PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

(Adopted January 2001, Edited June 2001)

PURPOSES OF ACCREDITATION

The Commission expects its members to accept and subscribe to the defined purposes of accreditation. The purposes of the Commission shall be the evaluation of member institutions to assure the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an institution has clearly defined objectives appropriate to higher education; has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected; appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantially; is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so; and demonstrates that it meets Commission standards. The Commission encourages and supports institutional development and improvement through self study and periodic evaluation by qualified peer professionals.

COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES

The Commission as a whole

$ Establishes and periodically reviews accreditation standards, policies, and practices for member institutions;

$ Serves as the primary decision-maker on accredited status of member institutions;

$ Evaluates institutions in terms of their own stated purposes;

$ Strives for consistency in determining accredited status of institutions;

$ Assists in interpreting accreditation issues to the various publics served by the Commission.

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

A Commissioner

$ Participates in all Commission meetings and attends them for their entire duration;

$ Studies documents as assigned prior to the meetings;

Serves as an in depth reader of evaluation visit materials as assigned;

$ Votes according to his or her best professional judgment in the light of existing policy and standards;

$ Participates on Commission committees and in activities representing the Commission=s interests as assigned;

$ Attends and actively participates in Commission activities such as evaluation team visits and retreats;

$ Participates in self study and evaluation of the Commission;

$ Participates in Commission planning efforts;

$ Ensures that all functions of the Commission are executed responsibly through the Executive Director;

$ Participates in the evaluation of the Executive Director;

$ Notifies the Commission chairperson or Executive Director in a timely manner if the Commissioner's position or status changes during a term so that the Commissioner no longer meets the requirement for the category to which appointed.

ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

A Commissioner

$ Respects the confidentiality of relationships between the Commission and the institutions it accredits.

$ Avoids conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest.

$ Is familiar with and adheres to established bylaws and policies.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONS IN MULTI-COLLEGE/MULTI-UNIT DISTRICTS OR SYSTEMS

(Adopted June 1999)

Introduction

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges and the other regional commissions have historically accredited colleges rather than districts or systems. The actual array of institutions in the region, however, is such that almost half of the member institutions are part of larger systems, either by being part of a multi-college district/system or owned by a larger corporate entity.

Unintended asymmetries have become evident, resulting in accreditation processes that serve multi-college districts/systems and their colleges differently from single college entities. For example, the role of trustees in the preparation of the self study, the review of the document, and interaction with the visiting team is clearly accounted for in the course of a typical single college institutional evaluation. These important involvements frequently do not happen, or happen to the same degree, in the multi-college setting. Similarly, system chancellors and other important central office executives, staff, and faculty leaders may not be significantly involved with the accreditation activities of district/system colleges. This results primarily because existing accreditation processes focus on the college as the responsible entity, and are less than clear regarding the district-college connections which should be reviewed during the development of the self study and evaluation site visit as indicators of institutional quality.

The purpose of this policy is to address the important relationships between institutions and systems in accreditation matters and to clarify the Commission's expectations regarding the conduct and outcomes of institutional reviews. Specifically, the goals are:

- To confirm that the Commission accredits colleges, not districts or systems.
- To address concerns regarding the equitable evaluation of all institutions regardless of the differences in organizational setting.
- To address concerns that the level of scrutiny for all important organizational functions and outcomes is the same for all types of institutions, regardless of their organizational setting.
- To better serve the purposes of accreditation by providing for close coordination among the institution(s), the district/system, the evaluation team(s), and the Commission.

The core principles of this policy are those that have been identified by member institutions and the Commission as being central to the consideration of institutions in multi-college, multi-unit systems or districts. These principles are:

1. The Commission reaffirms that individual colleges are the unit of analysis for the accreditation evaluations.

2. For colleges in multi-unit systems, the central district or organization plays a material role in the ability of the institution to gain and sustain accredited status.

3. The impact of the central entity affects all the Standards of Accreditation directly or indirectly, not just the standard on governance and administration.

4. Institutions have the responsibility to describe and display clearly the particular way functions are distributed in their unique multi-college organization. The Commission will evaluate the institution in light of the characteristics of each organization.

5. The level of scrutiny of all-important functions should be the same for all institutions. The fact that a college is in a multi-college setting is incidental to full accountability for functions that affect the college.

6. Parallel to the practice in single campus districts, when a team identifies serious inadequacies in the performance of a central office function, the consequence could jeopardize the accreditation of one, some or all of the district/system colleges.

7. The Commission reserves the right to initiate direct interaction with district/system officers at any time when concerns arise regarding the ability of institutions to demonstrate that they meet or exceed the Standards of Accreditation.

8. A district/system may request an evaluation of the effectiveness of central functions in conjunction with any institutional reviews. This activity is limited to issues related to the ability of colleges to demonstrate that they meet or exceed the Standards of Accreditation. The outcome of this activity does not result in any "accredited" status for the district/system.

COMMISSION PROCEDURES REGARDING THE EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONS IN MULTI-COLLEGE SYSTEMS OR DISTRICTS

A. Self Study

1. Prior to initiating the self study process and in consultation with the district/system, the institution must specify whether primary responsibility for all or parts of a specific function is at the college or district level. This organizational "map" is important in evaluating the quality of the performance of that function and establishing accountability for doing so. Those who are responsible should be involved in reporting about the function and be held accountable for its improvement. As a result, close cooperation between and among the institutions and the district/system office is expected as a part of the institutional self study. Moreover, the Commission recognizes that institutions in a multi-college system may have lateral relationships with other institutions in the district/system which must be addressed, and these too are part of the plan for developing the self study.

2. Individuals, whether on the campus or in the central office, must be actively involved in the self study based upon who has responsibility for the institutional function. For institutions in multi-college districts/systems, the self study will contain a functional map describing the distribution of activities and responsibility between and college and the district/system. This could be reflected in the required "organization for the self study" section, where the participation of appropriate persons would be identified.

3. In the self study, institutions are expected to include a discussion of the impact of the identified district/system functions and decisions on the college. For example, the Board's role in adopting the college mission statement is addressed in the standard dealing with mission; the central office responsibility for personnel is discussed in the standard on faculty and staff; the district/system financial allocation system should be addressed in the standard on financial resources. The functional map outlining the distribution of functions between the college and the central system will provide guidance for this discussion.

The district/system chief executive officer and governing board are expected to be substantially and collegially involved in the development of the self study.

4. At the governing board level, certification of an institutional self study is achieved by a resolution accepted by the governing board which testifies that there has been broad-based involvement from all relevant constituencies, and that the governing board has read the self study.

B. Standards

In any given district/system the distribution of functions between the district and the institutions may vary. The Commission does not try to dictate to a district, system, or organization the specific distribution of functions which should be followed. However, the

Commission believes that accountability for the relevant functions should be applied to *every* standard, wherever those functions are located in the organizational structure.

C. Team Composition

Team composition will continue to be shaped by the institution being accredited. Teams visiting colleges in multi-college districts will have the range of expertise appropriate for the college and also individuals with multi-college district/system perspectives (*e.g.*, Chancellors, Chief Business Officers from multi-campus organizations). Institutions may request team members with special expertise in multi-college issues. The Commission will make every effort to include individuals who have experience in similarly situated institutions and multi-college districts/systems to serve as team chairs and team members in these situations.

D. Visit Organization

Institutions in multi-college organizations have the option to request individual, or coordinated site visits. At least three variations are most common:

- each institution is evaluated separately;
- all institutions within the organization are evaluated simultaneously;
- clusters of institutions are evaluated together.

The Commission continues to encourage the simultaneous arrangement in the interests of conservation of resources and encouraging opportunities for coordination and cooperation. However, this decision is ultimately made by the individual district/system.

E. District/System Visiting Team

1. When simultaneous visits are taking place in the colleges of a district/system, the Executive Director will name a Coordinating Chair from the team chairs involved, in consultation with the district/system chief executive officer. This Coordinating Chair, in consultation with the Executive Director, will form a small District/System Team which is drawn from all of the teams visiting the colleges. It will consist of all of the team chairs and such members of the respective teams as are needed to address the district/system issues identified in the self studies and by the evaluation teams.

The Coordinating Chair may have a separate Team Assistant available to him/her solely for the purpose of supporting the District/System Team and for performing organizational tasks related to this part of the evaluation visits. Team chairs on the special District/System Team will receive the self study, the previous team reports, and Commission action letters from every college involved and will make the materials available to institutional team members on the District/System Team.

The purpose of the Coordinating Chair and District/System Team is to validate the statements made in the self study(s), insure commonality and comparability of team recommendations which have district/system consequences, and to support the work of the teams evaluating each college. These activities will be woven into the activities of the college evaluation teams by each institutional team chair. The District/System Team has the responsibility for clarifying the recommendations of each team related to district/system functions. Any recommendations regarding district/system functions will be included in the institutional team reports. Each college team will validate the portions of the self study that are campus based; this part of the process remains much as it has been.

Depending on the circumstances, the District/System Team will spend an appropriate period of time visiting the central office and validating the portions of the self studies that pertain to centralized operations.

2. When only one college in a multi-college district/system is being evaluated, the team chair and appropriate team members will perform the same district/system validation functions on behalf of the evaluation team as described above.

F. Reports by the Institutional Teams and District/System Team

The District/System Team (or the institutional evaluation team when only one college is being evaluated) will develop conclusions that discuss the major issues pertaining to the district/system. These conclusions will be contained, as appropriate, within the appropriate standards discussions in the individual institutional team reports. This outcome will be achieved through the work of the Coordinating Chair with the members of the District/System team. Some system observations may pertain to all colleges, and others only to particular colleges. When the District/System Team feels a recommendation is in order that pertains to the district/system as a whole, that recommendation will appear in each of the institutional team reports.

At the end of each evaluation visit, the institutional team chair meets with the Chief Executive Officer to discuss major findings. The team chair will then make a presentation of the team process and findings at an open meeting involving the entire college community.

After the verbal exit reports are concluded at each of the campuses, the team chairs, led by the Coordinating Chair, will provide a verbal briefing to the chief executive officer of the district/system. This discussion is limited to the centralized functions identified in the institutional self studies and the issues related to them which are identified in the institutional self studies and the findings of the institutional teams. The themes reported by the Coordinating Chair ought to be congruent with those shared with the institutional chief executive officer(s) at each of the colleges.

Although the district/system policies may affect the accredited status of the institution(s), the District/System Team will not make recommendations on the accredited status of the colleges. Confidential recommendations on the accredited status of the colleges will come from each of the institutional teams.

G. Commission Actions and Public Disclosure

The Commission will receive the familiar items for each college in preparation for Commission Action: the self study, the team report, the catalog, and other pertinent documents. The Commission, using its reader system, will consider each institution separately and take the appropriate action for each.

The Commission will also discuss the district/system and develop a consensus on any matters to be communicated to the Chief Executive Officer of the district/system. In its action letters to the institutions, the Commission will comment on important district/system matters that impinge on or significantly enhance college quality.

In a case where one or more accreditation concerns relating to the district/system are identified, the Commission may request a special report from the district/system itself and may also specify a visit by Commission representatives to validate any such special report. The Commission will make clear that significant inadequacies in central office functions will jeopardize the accreditation of one, some, or all of the district/system colleges.

Should the Commission decide that a special district/system interim report and interim visit are in order, the interim team will normally include the Coordinating Chair (or the team chair if only one college was involved), a member of the Commission, and perhaps additional persons with special expertise, as needed. The purpose of the interim team is to validate the interim report from the district/system. This report could be the basis for subsequent Commission action relative to the accredited status of one or more of the institutions in the district/system.

H. Follow-up Activities

The chief executive officer of a district/system is required to share the report of any special interim visit with the governing board and appropriate staff at the district/system and at the colleges. Historically, the Commission has on occasion issued special private communications to college presidents on particular leadership issues. When the college involved is a member of a district/system, the district/system CEO will be copied on this correspondence.

I. Cost

The additional costs associated with the activities of a district/system team will be billed directly to the district/system involved on an actual cost basis and will not be charged to each institution through the institutional Evaluation Service Fee.

POLICY ON COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES

(Adopted January 1999)

Complaints against the Commission are limited to complaints regarding the agency=s standards, criteria, or procedures. In order to be considered a formal complaint against the Commission, a complaint must involve issues broader than a concern about a specific institutional action or a specific evaluation team.

The complaint must be written, and must state clearly the nature of the complaint, and it must be signed. The Executive Director, on behalf of the Commission, responds to each complaint made against the Commission within 30 days of receipt of the complaint (if more time than this is required to complete an investigation, the complainant is notified within the initial 30 days); reports the nature and disposition of any complaints to the Chair of the Commission; and compiles annually a list, available to the public on request, which summarizes the nature and disposition of any such complaints. Upon advice of counsel, the Commission retains the right to withhold public disclosure of information if potential legal action is involved in the complaint.

If a complaint filed against the Commission under the provisions of this section is not resolved by the Executive Director, the Commission chair shall designate one or more persons to review the handling of the complaint. The Commission shall review the report of the designated reviewer(s) and shall notify the complainant and the Executive Director of its response.

STUDENT AND PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST INSTITUTIONS

(Adopted June 1972, Revised January 1984, January 1993, edited October 1997, Revised June 2001)

Accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges is an expression of confidence that an institution is satisfactorily achieving its objectives, and that it meets or exceeds the Commission's standards and abides by Commission policies. The Commission is concerned with institutional integrity and with performance consistent with Commission standards and policies. While it cannot intervene in the internal procedures of institutions or act as a regulatory body, the Commission can and does respond to complaints regarding allegations of conditions at affiliated institutions that raise significant questions about the institution's compliance with the standards expected of an accredited institution.

The Commission does not consider allegations concerning the personal lives of individuals connected with its affiliated institutions. It assumes no responsibility for adjudicating isolated individual grievances between students, faculty, or members of the public and individual institutions. The Commission will not act as a court of appeal in matters of admission, granting or transfer of academic credit, grades, fees, student financial aid, student discipline, collective bargaining, faculty appointments, promotion, tenure and dismissals or similar matters.

Complaints are considered only when made in writing, when the complainant is clearly identified, and the complainant=s address is included. Substantial evidence should be included in support of the allegation that the institution is in significant violation of the Commission's standards and policies. Such evidence should state relevant and provable facts. The Commission requires that each affiliated institution have in place student grievance and public complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well publicized. The complainant should demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to pursue all review procedures provided by the institution.

When the Commission receives a complaint about a candidate or accredited institution, it reviews that information to determine if it is relevant to the compliance of that institution with Commission standards and policies. If appropriate, such information may be referred to the institution and/or to the visiting team next scheduled to evaluate the institution. The Commission at all times reserves the right to request information of an affiliated institution and to visit that institution for purposes of fact-finding, consistent with Commission policy. If Commission investigation yields credible evidence that indicates a systemic problem that calls into question the institution=s ability to meet Commission standards and policies, the Commission may invoke the sanctions provided for in policy.

PROCEDURES

1. Within ten days of the receipt of a complaint it will be acknowledged in writing and initially reviewed by the staff of the Commission.

   It is the complainant's responsibility to do the following:

   a. State the complaint in the clearest possible terms.
   b. Provide, in writing, a clear description of the evidence upon which the allegation is based.
   c. Demonstrate that all remedies available at the institution (grievance procedures, appeals, hearings, etc.) have been exhausted. The complainant should describe what has been done in this regard.
   d. Acknowledge awareness that Commission staff may send a copy of the complaint to the president of the institution.
   e. Include name and address.
   f. Sign the complaint.

2. If the Executive Director or designee finds the complaint to be not within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction, the complainant will be so notified. Individual complaints, whether acted upon or not by the Commission, will be retained in Commission files.

3. If the complaint appears to be within the scope of Commission policies and jurisdiction, and is substantially documented, a copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the institution's chief executive, who will be asked to respond to the Executive Director within thirty days. The Executive Director will send a copy of the complaint and correspondence to the chairperson of the Accrediting Commission.

4. The Commission staff will review the complaint, the response, and evidence submitted by the institution's president, and will determine one of the following:

   a. That the complaint will not be processed further. The complainant will be so notified.
   b. That the complaint has sufficient substance to warrant further investigation (which may include referral to the Commission). The Commission may request information of the institution and may visit that institution for purposes of fact-finding. If Commission investigation reveals credible evidence that the institution is not meeting Commission standards and policies, the Commission may invoke the sanctions provided for in policy. In the event of further investigation, the complainant will be so notified.

   Although every effort will be made to expedite a final decision, it is not possible to guarantee a specific time frame in which the process will be completed. If further investigation is warranted, the time required to conduct the investigation may vary considerably depending on the circumstances and the nature of the complaint.

5. The complainant and the institution will be notified of the outcome of the review of the complaint.

    a. If the complaint is investigated further, as in 4.b above, the complainant and the institution will be notified of the outcome of the investigation.

       Prior to the Commission's disposition of the complaint, the institution will have an opportunity to respond in writing within thirty days to the findings of the investigation. The complainant and the institution involved will be notified of the decision. The decision as communicated by the Executive Director is final.

    b. If the complaint was referred to ACCJC by another agency, that agency will receive copies of correspondence that state the outcome of the complaint.

6. The Commission will keep a record of student and public complaints against member institutions. Commission staff will report to the Commission annually regarding the status and resolution of student and public complaints against member institutions. At the time of an institution=s comprehensive evaluation, a summary of any complaints will be provided to the team chair for consideration by the evaluation team.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

(Adopted October 1972, Revised January 1978, June 1991, June 1996, Edited October 1997, Revised January 2002)

BACKGROUND

Accreditation, a voluntary process of peer review dependent on recognized standards of good practice, is in part an affirmation that the institution

- has clearly defined objectives appropriate to higher education;
- has established conditions under which the achievement of these objectives can reasonably be expected;
- presents evidence that it is in fact accomplishing the objectives substantially;
- is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so; and
- demonstrates that it meets Commission standards, Eligibility Requirements, and policies.

The scope of an institution's accreditation covers everything done in its name.

POLICY

A substantive change is a change which alters: the mission, scope, or name of the institution; the nature of the constituency served; the location or geographical area served; the control of the institution; the content of courses or programs to an extent which represents a significant departure from current curricula or the mode of delivery of a program so that courses constituting 50% or more of a program are offered at a distance or through electronic delivery; or the credit awarded to courses or programs. Since it is the Commission's responsibility to determine the effect of a substantive change on the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the total institution, it is the Commission's policy that such changes must be approved by the Commission prior to implementation. When an institution proposes to make a change which is considered substantive, the change must be approved according to the Substantive Change Approval Process. Upon successful review and approval, the institution's accreditation will be extended to areas affected by the change.

The following changes are all substantive changes:

1. **Change in mission, scope, or name of the institution**
    - a change in the purpose or character of the institution
    - a change in the degree level from that which was previously offered by the institution
    - any change in the official name of the institution

2. **Change in the nature of the constituency served**
    - a change in the intended student clientele
    - closure of an institution

3. **Change in the location or geographical area served**
   - offering courses or programs outside the geographic region currently served
   - moving to a new location
   - establishing an additional location geographically apart from the main campus, at which students can complete at least 50% of an educational program
   - closing a location geographically apart from the main campus at which students can complete at least 50% of an educational program

4. **Change in the control of the institution**
   - any change in the legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
   - merging with another institution
   - contracting for the delivery of courses or programs in the name of the institution with a non-regionally accredited organization
   - a change by a parent institution of one of its off-campus sites into a separate institution

5. **Change in courses or programs or their mode of delivery that represents a significant departure from current practice.**
   - addition of a program that represents a significant departure from an institution's current programs
   - addition of courses that represent a significant departure from the current curricula of an institution
   - addition of courses that constitute 50% or more of a program or 50% of the college's courses offered through a mode of distance or electronic delivery

6. **A change in credit awarded**
   - an increase of 50% or more in the number of credit hours awarded for the successful completion of a program
   - a change from clock hours to credit hours

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE APPROVAL PROCESS

Institutions wishing to effect a substantive change should follow these procedures.
Note that institutions which have been declared eligible for accreditation but have not yet achieved candidate or accredited status may not employ the substantive change approval process.

1. Notify the Commission: The institution begins the Substantive Change Approval Process by notifying the Commission of the proposed change, the need for the change, and the anticipated effects. Commission staff determine whether or not the proposed change is indeed substantive. Early notification enables the staff to provide information and advice about how the institution might best proceed through the Substantive Change Process.

2. Preparing the Substantive Change Report: If the Commission staff determines that the proposed change is substantive in nature, the institution is asked to submit a Substantive Change Report for review by the Commission's Committee on Substantive Change.

   The Substantive Change Report should include the following:

   A. A concise description of the proposed change and the reasons for it.

   B. A description of the educational program(s) to be offered and evidence that the educational purposes of the change are clear and appropriate if the substantive change involves a new educational program.

   C. A description of the planning process which led to the request for the change, how the change relates to the institution's stated mission, the assessment of needs and resources which has taken place, and the anticipated effect of the proposed change on the rest of the institution.

   D. Evidence that the institution has provided adequate human, management, financial, and physical resources and processes to initiate, maintain, and monitor the change and to assure that the activities undertaken are accomplished with acceptable quality.

If the substantive change is to establish a branch campus, private institutions must include projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow at a branch campus. Public institutions, in keeping with the financial reporting requirements of their district, system, or governmental agency, must include financial information which allows for comparable analysis of the financial planning and management of a branch campus.

If the change involves the formation of a separate institution from an off-campus center or branch campus, the projected financial information must be provided for the parent institution of the proposed split. The new separate institution must begin the process for separate accreditation.

E. Evidence that the institution has received all necessary internal or external approvals. The report should state clearly what faculty, administrative, governing board, or regulatory agency approvals are needed and evidence that any legal requirements have been met.

F. Evidence that each Eligibility Requirement will still be fulfilled after the change. Any requirements that are particularly impacted by the change should be addressed in detail.

G. Evidence that each accreditation standard will still be fulfilled after the change and that all relevant Commission policies are addressed. Any standards that are particularly impacted by the change should be addressed in detail.

H. Other information requested by Commission staff that is pertinent to the specific nature of the change.

3. Commission Action: Once the Substantive Change Report is received by the Commission, it is reviewed by the Commission's Committee on Substantive Change, which has full authority to act. The Committee may approve or deny a substantive change request or return it to the institution for additional information. At its discretion, the Committee may refer the decision on the substantive change request to the entire Commission at its next meeting. Commission staff keep the institution informed as to the status of the substantive change request. The institution is notified of the Committee action within two weeks of the Committee meeting. Denial of the request will include reasons for the denial.

3. Appeal: If the institution wishes to appeal the decision of the Commission's Committee on Substantive Change, the appeal must be filed in writing and will be deliberated at the next meeting of the Commission. Members of the Committee on Substantive Change may participate in the discussion but will abstain from voting on the appeal.

4. Referral to the Commission: In the event a substantive change request has been referred to the Commission for consideration, the institution will be notified of Commission action within two weeks of the meeting at which action occurred. In the event that the change is judged to be of

such magnitude as to potentially affect the candidate or accredited status of the institution, the review process for the substantive change may be expanded to include a review of the accreditation status of the institution and a visit.

5. Future visits: Approved substantive changes should be addressed in the next comprehensive review of the institution. If the institution is not due for a comprehensive evaluation within two years of the approval of the substantive change, an on-site evaluation, or other measures as the Commission may determine, may be required. Costs for an on-site evaluation will be borne by the institution. (Note: Off-campus centers, including branch campuses, that offer 50% or more of a program are subject to an on-site inspection within the first six months of establishment.) The Commission reserves the right to request a report and visit to assess the effects of any substantive change it deems to be a very significant departure from the past, including a requirement to submit periodic prescribed reports and support special visit(s) by representatives of the Commission.

POLICY ON COMMISSION ACTIONS ON INSTITUTIONS

(Adopted January 1977, Revised January 1979, January 1991, June 1998, Edited July 2002)

Institutions applying for candidacy or initial accreditation and accredited institutions undergoing periodic evaluation will be reviewed by the Accrediting Commission. The Commission will examine institutional documents (catalog and schedule), the institutional self study, the evaluation team report, and documents from previous evaluations. The Commission will apply, as it deems appropriate, one of the following actions in each case.

I. Actions on Candidate Institutions

- Grant Candidacy. Candidacy is a pre-accreditation status, initially awarded for two years. Candidate status is granted only to institutions that demonstrate the ability and will to meet the standards of accreditation within the candidate period.
- Extend Candidacy. Candidacy is renewed for two years. (Four years in candidate status is maximum available.)
- Defer a decision on candidacy pending receipt of specified information from the institution.
- Deny Candidacy. The institution may reapply for candidacy by submitting a self study after two years. Denial of candidacy may be subject to a request for review by the Commission and subsequent appeal to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges under the published policies and procedures of these two bodies.
- Termination of Candidacy. If, in the opinion of the Commission, an institution has not maintained its eligibility for candidacy or has failed to explain or correct deficiencies of which it has been given notice, the candidacy of the institution may be terminated. Termination may be subject to a request for review by the Commission and subsequent appeal to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges under the published policies and procedures of these two bodies.

II. Actions on Initial Accreditation

- Grant initial accreditation. The institution must be fully evaluated again within a maximum of six years from the date of the Commission action.
- Grant initial accreditation with a request for a progress report and/or a visit within a limited time. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of the information to be submitted and of the visit to be made.
- Defer a decision on accreditation pending receipt of specified additional information from the institution or to permit an institution to correct serious weaknesses and report to the Commission within a limited time. If the institution is a candidate for accreditation, candidacy continues during the period of deferment.
  - Denial of accreditation. A denial is a final decision which is subject to a request for review by the Commission and subsequent appeal to the Western

Association of Schools and Colleges under the published policies and procedures of these two bodies. A candidate institution may be permitted to remain in candidate status until it is ready for a new evaluation within a limited period of time. In cases where the four year limit on candidacy has been reached, the Commission may consider extending the limit in special circumstances. If an extension is not granted, the institution may not reapply for candidacy for at least two years.

III. Actions on Accredited Institutions

- Reaffirmation of accreditation without conditions.

- Reaffirmation of accreditation, with a request for a progress report to be submitted by a specific date, to achieve resolution within a one to two year period.

- Reaffirmation of accreditation, with a request for a progress report to be followed by a limited visit. In such cases, the Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of any further information to be submitted by the institution and of the visit to be made. Institutions are expected to achieve resolution of issues within a one to two year period. The purpose of the visit is to verify in person the institution's response to the Commission's recommendations.

- Deferment of a decision on accreditation pending receipt of specified additional information from the institution or to permit an institution to correct serious weaknesses and report to the Commission within six months or less. The report is followed by a visit addressed primarily to the reasons for the decision. The Commission will specify the nature, purpose, and scope of the information to be submitted and of the visit to be made. The accredited status of the institution continues during the period of deferment.

- Warning. When the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course deviating from the Commission's eligibility criteria, standards, or policies to an extent that the institution's continued accreditation may become jeopardized, the Commission may issue a warning to the institution to correct its deficiencies, refrain from certain activities, or initiate certain activities within a stated period of time. The Commission will give the institution written reasons for its decision. During the warning period, the institution will be subject to reports and visits, at a minimum of every six months. Resolution of the concerns is required within two years or the Commission must take adverse action. The accreditation status of the institution continues during the warning period.

- Probation. When a candidate or accredited institution fails to respond to conditions imposed upon it by the Commission, including a warning, or when it deviates significantly from the Commission's eligibility criteria, standards, or

policies but not to such an extent as *to* warrant a show cause order or the termination of candidacy or accreditation, it may be placed on probation for a specified period of time. While on probation, the institution will be subject to special scrutiny by the Commission,
including a requirement to submit periodic prescribed reports and receive special visit(s) by representatives of the Commission. The Commission will give the institution written reasons for its decision. Institutions are expected to correct deficiencies within a two year period or the Commission will take adverse action. If the institution has not taken steps satisfactory to the Commission to remove the cause or causes for its probation at the end of the specified time, the Commission will issue a show cause order. The accredited status of the institution continues during the probation period; however, the reaffirmation may be delayed during the period of probation.

- Show Cause. When the Commission finds an institution to be in substantial non-compliance with its eligibility criteria, standards, or policies or when the institution has not responded to the conditions imposed by the Commission, the Commission may require the institution to show cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn at the end of a stated period. In such cases, the burden of proof will rest on the institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should be continued. While under a show cause order, the institution will be subject to special scrutiny by the Commission, including a requirement to submit periodic prescribed reports and receive special visit(s) by representatives of the Commission, at a minimum of every six months. The Commission will give the institution written reasons for its decision. Resolution of the reasons for the show cause order should be achieved in no longer than one year. If the institution does not demonstrate that it meets accreditation standards and eligibility requirements, the Commission will take adverse action. The accredited status of the institution continues during the period of the show cause order.

- Termination of Accreditation. If, in the judgment of the Commission, an institution has not satisfactorily explained or corrected matters of which it has been given notice, its accreditation may be terminated. The Commission will give the institution written reasons for its decision. Termination of accreditation is subject to a request for review and appeal under the applicable policies and procedures of the Commission and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The accredited status of the institution continues pending completion of any review appeal process the institution may request. Otherwise, the institution's accreditation ends on the date when the time period permitting such a request expires. In such a case, the institution must complete again the entire accreditation process to qualify for candidacy or accreditation.

The Commission requires that a member institution remain in continuing compliance with the Eligibility Requirements and the Standards of Accreditation, comply with Commission policies and procedures, and provide information as requested by the Commission in accordance with the Commission's accreditation responsibilities.

However, if an institution cannot document that it is in compliance with the Eligibility Requirements and/or Standards of Accreditation within a maximum of two years after the initial action, the Commission will take an adverse action. In keeping with the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, the Commission defines adverse action as denial, withdrawal, suspension, or termination of accreditation or candidacy. If the Commission determines that there is good cause, the Commission may extend the time allowed for the institution to demonstrate that it meets or exceeds the Standards of Accreditation. Progress Reports, Midterm Reports, Deferral of a Decision, Warning, Probation, and Show Cause are not adverse actions in the context of federal regulations.

The Commission will announce publicly, as appropriate, through its Executive Director and will publish in appropriate publications and in the WASC annual Directory the status of each institution in accordance with the Commission's policy on "Disclosure and Confidentiality of Information." The Executive Director will attempt to reach agreement with the institution on a public statement to be used by both parties. However, the Commission reserves final authority in event of impasse.

If a specific inquiry is made about an institution which has been warned, placed on probation, or issued a show cause order, the Executive Director shall inform the inquirer that such an action has been taken and the reasons therefore.

In addition, the Commission requires Annual Reports, Midterm Reports from every institution during the third year of the six year evaluation cycle. Progress Reports, special evaluations, and site visits are used as necessary during the cycle in order to monitor institutional improvement activities and compliance with accreditation standards and policies.

If an institution so conducts its affairs that they become a matter of public concern, or uses the public forum to take issue with an action of the Commission relating to that institution, the Commission may announce, through the Executive Director, the action taken and the basis for that action, making public any pertinent information available to it.

REVIEW OF COMMISSION ACTIONS

(Adopted January 1977, Revised January 1979, June 1998)
The Commission defines adverse actions as denial, withdrawal, suspension, or termination of accreditation or preaccreditation as defined in ' 602.2 of the Higher Education Act.

Institutions who are denied initial accreditation or preaccreditation, or whose candidate or accredited status is denied, withdrawn, suspended, or terminated by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges may request a review of the Commission=s decisions. For purposes of compliance with ' 602.28(b)(5) of the Higher Education Act, these actions are considered to be adverse actions. For Commission review of denial, withdrawal, suspension or termination of accreditation, or termination of accreditation or preaccreditation, the institution may be represented by counsel. Such institutional appeals are limited to written appeals.

Such a review must be requested prior to filing of an appeal by the institution to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The following procedures will govern the conduct of the Commission's review:

1. If the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges decides to take any of the actions listed above, its Executive Director will notify the institution concerned of the decision by certified mail, return receipt requested, within approximately seven calendar days of the Commission's decision. Said notification shall contain a succinct statement of the reasons for the Commission's decision.

2. If the institution wishes a review by the Commission, it shall file with the Executive Director a request for such a review under the policies and procedures of the Commission. This request should be submitted by the chief executive officer of the institution and, in the case of private institutions, co-signed by the chairperson of the governing board. Requests for review by an institution in a multi-college system shall be co-signed by the chief executive officer of the system. This request must be received by certified mail, return receipt requested, within twenty-eight calendar days of the date of the mailing of the Commission's notification of its decision to the institution.

3. Within twenty-one calendar days after the date of its request for a review, the institution, through its chief administrative officer, must submit a written statement of the reasons why, in the institution's opinion, a review of the Commission's decision is warranted. As a general rule, this written statement should respond only to the Commission's statement of the reasons for the Commission's decision and to the evidence that was before the Commission at the time of its decision. However, if the institution believes that there are compelling reasons to expand the scope of the response or if it wishes to introduce new evidence which may have been generated or discovered since the time of the Commission's decision, it may do so in a separate

section of its response.

4. On receipt of the institution's written statement referred to in paragraph 3, the chairperson of the Commission will select a review committee of three or more persons. A roster of the review committee will be sent to the institution normally within twenty-one calendar days of the date of the Commission's receipt of the institution's written statement.

5. Within a reasonable period of time after the review committee has been selected, the Executive Director will schedule a visit to the institution by the review committee.

6. Prior to the visit to the institution, the review committee will review available information. If additional information is needed, the chairperson of the review committee may request such information from the chief executive officer of the institution.

7. The review visit will be investigative and designed to determine if the Commission's decision was substantially supported by the evidence before the Commission at the time of the Commission's decision. If, however, in the judgment of the review committee, changes have occurred which might materially affect the decision of the Commission, the review committee chairperson, with the approval of the members, may accept new evidence bearing on these changes.

8. The committee should open and close its visit with a meeting with the chief executive officer of the institution. At the closing meeting the chairperson should, among other matters, attempt to ascertain whether or not the institution has any complaints about any aspect of the visit.

9. The committee should prepare a report which cites and evaluates the evidence which the committee considers relevant to the question of whether the Commission's original decision was substantially supported by the evidence before the Commission at the time of its decision. If the committee accepts evidence of changes which occurred subsequent to the committee's original decision, the review committee should include a summary and analysis of such evidence in its report identifying it as new evidence and describing the weight given it.

10. The chairperson of the review committee will submit a copy of the committee's report which is referred to in paragraph 9 to the chief executive officer of the institution, the chairperson of the institution's governing board, and the Executive Director of the Commission, normally within twenty-one calendar days of the end of the review committee's visit.

11. Within fourteen calendar days of the institution's receipt of the review committee's report, the chief executive officer may submit a written response to the Executive Director of the Commission, with a copy to the chairperson of the review committee. Failure of the institution to submit a response shall constitute an acceptance by the

institution of the Commission's original decision.

12. In a confidential letter to the Commission, the review committee shall make one of the following recommendations:

    a. The decision of the Commission was substantially supported by the evidence before the Commission at the time of the Commission's decision;
    b. The decision of the Commission was not substantially supported by the evidence before the Commission at the time of the Commission's decision; or
    c. The decision of the Commission was substantially supported by the evidence available at the time of the Commission's decision, but the institution has taken significant steps to improve conditions and remedy deficiencies and the Commission should reevaluate its decision in light of these steps.

    The recommendation of the review committee to the Commission shall not be disclosed to the institution being reviewed. The recommendation is not binding on the Commission.

13. The chief executive officer of the institution and a limited number of the staff will be invited to meet with the two readers of the committee's report and the chairperson of the review committee shortly before the meeting of the Commission at which the report will be acted upon. Discussion at this preliminary meeting will be confined to the report of the review committee referred to in section 9 and the institution's response to this report.

14. The two readers will report the substance of this meeting to the Commission when it meets. If institutional representatives wish to appear before the Commission at that time, their request will be granted, but the meeting with the readers is intended to obviate the need for such an appearance except in unusual circumstances.

15. In making its decision on the institution's status, the Commission will consider the evidence available to it and then reach a final decision to (a) reaffirm its original decision; (b) modify it; or (c) reverse it. As soon after the meeting as practicable, the Executive Director will notify the chief executive officer of the institution by certified mail of the Commission's decision.

16. The decision of the Commission, referred to in paragraph 15, shall be final as far as the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges is concerned. However, if the institution remains aggrieved, it may file an appeal with the President of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges through the Executive Director of the Commission in accordance with the provisions of Article VI of the Constitution of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

17. An institution retains its accredited or candidate status until the review process of the Commission is completed. If the institution files a subsequent appeal with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, its status remains unchanged until that appeal has been heard and decided.

18. The cost of the review will be borne by the institution. The request for a review must be accompanied by a deposit set by the Commission. If the actual cost is less than this amount, the excess will be refunded. If it is greater, the institution will be

billed for the difference.

DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

(Adopted January 1976, Revised June 1978, June 1996, June 1998)

It is the obligation of every institution applying for candidacy, extension of candidacy, accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation and of every candidate or accredited institution to provide the Commission with access to all parts of its operations, with due regard for the rights of individual privacy, and with complete and accurate information with respect to the institution's affairs, including reports of other accrediting, licensing, and auditing agencies. Failure to do so, or to make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure, is sufficient reason in and of itself to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

The Commission will maintain inviolate the confidentiality of information supplied by the institution except in those rare cases where it is deemed necessary by the Commission to make public information which forms a substantive basis for the Commission's decision.

I. Policy on publication of Commission actions.

The Commission may announce publicly, as appropriate, through its Executive Director and will publish in the WASC Bulletin and/or annual Directory the fact that

1. The institution's application for candidacy or accreditation has been denied;
2. An institution has been granted candidacy or accredited;
3. The institution's candidacy has not been extended or its accreditation reaffirmed;
4. The institution has been placed on probation;
5. The institution has been given a show cause order effective at a specific date; or
6. The institution's candidacy has not been renewed or its accreditation has been terminated.

II. Policy on publicly available written materials.

It shall be the policy of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges to maintain and make publicly available written materials describing:

(1) Each type of accreditation and preaccreditation granted by the Commission;

(2) Commission procedures for applying for accreditation or preaccreditation;

(3)The criteria and procedures used by the Commission for determining whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, deny, restrict, revoke, or take any other action related to each type of accreditation and preaccreditation that the agency grants;

(4) The names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of the members of the Commission's policy and decision making bodies as well as the agency's principal administrative staff; and

(5) The institutions or programs that the Commission currently accredits or preaccredits and the date when the agency will review or reconsider the accreditation or preaccreditation of each institution or program.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

(Adopted June 1999, Edited July 2002)

Introduction.

The Commission believes that the two major responsibilities of institutional accreditation are quality assurance to the public and improvement of member institutions. Accreditation systematically accomplishes these purposes through standards of good practice, institutional self study, external peer review and recommendations, Commission actions, and follow-up. The purpose of this policy is to strengthen the ability of institutions and the Commission to fulfill mutual obligations to inform, to educate, and to enhance the level of public confidence in higher education institutions in the process and outcomes of voluntary, non-governmental accreditation, within the region and across regions. Specifically, the goals are:

- To make a meaningful contribution to the body of information available to consumers of higher education services and to facilitate easier access to such information;
- To provide institutions with a way to communicate with their multiple publics regarding accreditation matters; and
- To enhance public understanding of accreditation, and thereby to enhance public confidence in institutions of higher education through peer review, self regulation, and institutional improvement.

In developing this policy on public disclosure the Commission attempts to keep certain principles in mind that are relevant as these issues are addressed over time. These principles are:

1. A reasonable balance needs to be fashioned which respects the need for confidentiality and the need for the multiple publics served by member institutions and the Commission to have reliable, current, and useful information about an institution's accreditation status. Both the Commission and member institutions have public disclosure responsibilities with respect to accreditation.
2. Institutions themselves need to disclose more about their effectiveness, thereby taking responsibility for major elements of public disclosure.
3. The Commission should utilize consistent disclosure approaches for all member institutions.
4. The Commission should not provide information about individuals or the quality of specific programs within an institution.

5. The Commission recognizes and promotes the diversity of institutions as a strength of our society and therefore should not rank schools and colleges in its public disclosure systems.

6. The Commission is concerned with institutional performance. Therefore, public disclosure of accreditation information about an institution by the Commission is limited to matters of Commission standards of accreditation and actions with respect to an institution.

ACCREDITING COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES

I. Information for the general public about the accredited status of individual institutions.

A. Commission Actions

Institutions applying for candidacy or initial accreditation and accredited institutions undergoing periodic evaluation will be reviewed by the Accrediting Commission. The Commission will examine institutional documents, the institutional self study, the evaluation team report, and documents from previous evaluations. The Commission makes a determination about the accredited status of the institution, using its Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions.

In accordance with the requirements of the Higher Education Act §602.27(c), the Commission also discloses in its Handbook of Accreditation, Directory or other appropriate publications each type of accreditation and candidacy granted by the Commission, the procedures for applying for accreditation or candidacy, the criteria and procedures used by the Commission determining whether to grant, reaffirm, deny, restrict, or take any other action related to the accredited status of institutions; the names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of the Commission and principal staff; the institutions the Commission currently accredits or recognizes in candidacy status; and the date when the Commission will next review or consider the accreditation or candidacy of each institution. Other matters of public interest are the domain of the institution.

Under the provisions of the U.S. Secretary's Procedures and Criteria for the Recognition of Accrediting Agencies (§602.2), only denial, withdrawal, suspension, or termination of accreditation or candidacy are defined as adverse actions by the Commission. Appeals of denial or termination are governed by the provisions of the WASC Constitution.

B. WASC Directory Information

The WASC Directory information is published on the ACCJC website and includes the name of the institution and location, the chief executive officer, the form of control, each type of accreditation or preaccreditation held by the institution, the date of initial accreditation, and the date of the next comprehensive review.

C. Statement of Accreditation Status.

The Commission has adopted a set of basic information elements that will be made available in Commission publications, or on request, about the accredited status of individual institutions. This information will be recorded and disseminated in a common format. A Statement of Accreditation Status will be prepared for each member institution. The Statement of Accredited Status will also be available to the public on request. The Statement includes information about the nature of the institution and its scope, its accredited status, the nature of Commission actions regarding the institution, a definition of the meaning of the accredited status, and a discussion of any terms that might require explanation.

D. Commission Responsibilities to the Institution.

The Commission will prepare information for the institution which outlines the reasons for the action, the follow-up and the monitoring activities which will be required, and the time frame within which the institution must remedy the conditions which led to the action.

If an institution cannot document that it is in compliance with the Eligibility Requirements and/or Standards of Accreditation within a maximum of two years after the initial action, the Commission will take an adverse action. In keeping with the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, the Commission defines adverse action as denial, withdrawal, suspension, or termination of accreditation or candidacy. If the Commission determines that there is good cause, the Commission may extend the time allowed for the institution to demonstrate that it meets or exceeds the Standards of Accreditation. Progress Reports, Midterm Reports, Deferral of a Decision, Warning, Probation, and Show Cause are not adverse actions in the context of federal regulations.

E. Disclosure of Commission Actions on the Accredited Status of Institutions.

Actions of the Commission regarding the accredited status of institutions as described in the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions are public actions. The Commission publishes the status of each institution in appropriate publications such as Commission Newsletters, the WASC Directory, and the ACCJC web site. The Commission also notifies appropriate governmental agencies and accrediting bodies as required by the

Higher Education Act.

When the action of the Commission involves a status of deferral of a decision, warning, probation, show cause or termination, the Executive Director will invite the institution to develop a joint statement appropriate to the college. This statement can be issued by the Commission and the institution. However, the Commission reserves final authority to develop and issue a statement in the event of an impasse.

If an institution misrepresents a Commission action or uses the public forum to take issue with an action of the Commission relating to that institution, the Commission may announce, through the Executive Director, the action taken and the basis for that action.

II. Information about the application of the accreditation processes at a particular institution.

A. The Commission publishes the names of institutions scheduled for comprehensive review annually in the Commission newsletter. This notice also includes an invitation for third-party comment and information regarding how, and to whom, that comment should be delivered. The institutional evaluation schedule is available to the public on request.

B. The Commission provides each institution under review with a roster of the team members, including their positions and institutional affiliations. Institutions may object to a proposed team member for cause. These rosters are updated regularly as team membership is adjusted.

C. The Commission does not itself make public the institutional self study or the team report without the permission of the college, unless the institution has misrepresented the content of the self study or the findings of the reports. In the event of such misrepresentation, the Commission is free to disclose the reports and provide accurate statements about the institution's accredited status.

D. The Commission does not disclose any information about an institution's potential accredited status before a Commission action is taken. Information about actions under review or appeal (denial of candidacy or initial accreditation, or termination of accreditation) will not be disclosed until a final decision is rendered, unless required by federal regulation. Review and Appeal procedures are found in the policy on Review of Commission Actions.

E. The institutional file in the Commission office is part of the private relationship with the institution and is therefore not available to the public. Upon request, the Commission will disclose the number of complaints received about the institution since the last comprehensive evaluation, the general nature of those complaints, and their resolution or status. In accordance with its Policy on Student and Public Complaints against

Institutions (Handbook of Accreditation), the Commission will only include in that disclosure formal, signed complaints that are within the Commission's jurisdiction and which have been referred to the institution. Multiple complaints about a single issue will be assessed to determine how those complaints should be recorded. The Commission informs the institution when such an inquiry is received.

III. **Information about the Commission and its processes**.

A. The Commission publishes an Annual Report on the status of higher education in the region from the experiences of accreditors. Typically, the report includes a review of major issues in the region, an analysis of actions taken during the year, summaries of the focus of team findings and recommendations, changes in Commission policies and practices, and summaries of staff activities.

B. The Commission newsletter, which is published quarterly, provides timely information about accreditation, the Commission, and its policies and practices. The newsletter is distributed to all member institutions, other accreditors, and appropriate higher education and government associations and agencies. The newsletter is available to the public on request.

C. The Commission publishes handbooks, videos, and other materials which describe the Commission and its processes which are distributed to all member institutions and to the public on request. These materials are free to members and other accreditors and are available for a nominal charge to others.

D. The Commission maintains a website which informs members and the public about the Commission and its activities.

E. The Commission and Commission staff make presentations before organizations within higher education, government, and the public at large. The Commission and its staff participate in regional and national forums on subjects related to quality assurance and institutional improvement.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Institutions, as well as accrediting agencies, are accountable for honest and open communication with the public on institution-related issues in which there is a legitimate public interest. Honesty, openness, and concern for its constituents are indicators of the integrity with which the institution conducts its interactions and communication with its public. Ultimately, this institutional integrity is one indicator of institutional quality and effectiveness, and the Commission includes these matters in its evaluation of institutions. The Commission relies on member institutions to conduct themselves in accordance with these principles of institutional responsibility.

I. Institutional Self Study and other Accreditation Reports

A. Self Studies. The Commission relies on the strong sense of collegiality, mutual respect, and trust in its relations with member institutions. The privilege of self-regulation requires openness with the public as well.

The self study is the property of the institution which developed it, but the self study should receive wide distribution within the institution. The Commission recognizes that some institutions may be governed by public disclosure statutes and expects that institutions will conduct themselves in accord with those laws and regulations.

B. Team Reports. The Commission requires that institutions share the findings and recommendations that result from the accreditation process widely throughout the institution, especially with those that contributed to the self study. Once an on-site evaluation is complete, institutions are required to make the report readily available through a wide distribution system. The institution is required to publicize the location of the team reports. Any excerpting of team reports for use by those outside the institution must be accompanied by explanatory information which discusses the complete context of accreditation. Any use of the team reports which misquotes, misleads, or misrepresents findings or recommendations is grounds for Commission release of the complete team report.

II. On-Site Evaluation

The Commission requires that the chief executive officer notify the campus community of the date and purpose of each comprehensive evaluation and any follow-up activity or reports requested by the Commission. Key elements in that notification to the campus community should include the following:

1. Notice of the opportunity for submission of third-party comments by the public and the process for doing so.

2. Information regarding where and how the Commission's Standards of Accreditation may be accessed at the institution.

3. Information regarding the development of the institutional self study and a call for widespread participation.

4. Information regarding the team visit, *e.g.*, team composition, dates of the visit, team schedule and activities. Institutions are expected to publicize times and locations during the visit when team members will be available to meet informally with any member of the campus community on any accreditation issue.

III. Dissemination of information within individual institutions regarding Commission actions

The Commission delegates the primary responsibility for communicating information about its status to the institution. However, the Commission action letter to the Chief Executive Officer requires that there be broad and timely dissemination of the team report and the Commission action letter within the institution, especially to those who were signatories to the self study. The Chair of the institutional Board and system or district Chancellor (where applicable) also receive a copy of the action letter and the team report.

IV. Representation of Eligibility, Candidacy, or Accredited Status

A. The institution is expected to describe its accredited status using the language prescribed in the Commission Policy on Representation of Accredited Status, and to avoid expanding that representation to include other matters such as transfer of credit. The address and telephone number of the Commission office is included when the college references its accredited status, including catalogs and recruiting materials. Institutions send a copy of the institutional catalog to the Commission office as each iteration is published.

B. The chief executive officer of the institution is responsible for informing the campus community of the accreditation action taken by the Commission and the reasons for the action. This communication should be coordinated with district or system officers as appropriate. If the accreditation action includes any special status, the institution is obligated to provide that information to all current and prospective students and staff in a timely manner. As noted in Section I.D. of this policy, the Commission will work with the institution in these cases to develop a statement that can be used for distribution to the campus community or for individual inquiry.

C. When the institution refers to its accredited status in any publications or advertisements during a period in which its accreditation may be subject to special scrutiny, the institution must disclose that information.

POLICY REGARDING MATTERS UNDER LITIGATION

(Adopted January 1989, Revised June 1996, January 2001)

The Commission's concerns are to determine whether an institution is in compliance with Commission standards and policies and to assist institutions, through established procedures, in the improvement of quality. To this end, the Commission takes appropriate action on credible evidence received from any reliable source, including the courts, that calls into question the ability of an institution to meet Commission standards and policies. It is the policy of the Accrediting Commission not to become involved in litigation within an institution. The Commission is not an adjudicatory agency, and it is not the role or function of the Commission to arrive at any determination regarding the merits of any aspect of pending litigation.

Because of the sensitivities created when litigation is pending during a site visit by an evaluation team, the Commission has developed the following guidelines.

Responsibility of the Institution

It is the responsibility of the institution to inform the Commission staff, prior to a visit, of any pending litigation against the institution. The staff will consult with the liaison officer to determine if any special advice will need to be provided to the team chair.

Responsibility of Visiting Teams

Visiting teams should not comment on pending litigation in such a way as to express an opinion about the merits of the lawsuit or its outcome. Team members are not precluded from meeting with individuals involved in litigation and hearing from them regarding the litigation. If such a meeting is held or if the subject of the litigation arises during the course of interviews, the institution will be informed. Team members are cautioned against saying or writing anything which may be used by either party in support of their positions in the lawsuit.

If questions arise prior to, during, or after a visit, Commission staff should be consulted.

RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

(Adopted June 1996, Revised January 1998)

The Commission has sought recognition and periodically seeks renewal of recognition by the Secretary of Education, in order that member institutions achieve and maintain eligibility to participate in programs such as HEA Title IV student financial aid. The Commission provides, upon request from the Secretary, any information sought regarding institutional compliance with HEA Title IV regulations.

The Commission notifies the Department of Education and relevant state agencies of all institutional actions, immediately following the meeting at which action is taken. If the Commission=s final decision is to deny, withdraw, suspend, or terminate the accreditation or preaccreditation of an institution or program or take other adverse action against an institution or program, the Commission will notify the Secretary of that decision at the same time it notifies the institution or program.

Copies of publications such as the Commission Newsletter and the WASC Directory are routinely sent to the state and federal agencies with which the Commission communicates.

The Commission annually sends an updated directory of accredited institutions to the Secretary of Education.

The Commission maintains regular communication with the Department of Education and relevant state agencies. It responds to inquiries from government agencies and forwards responses to complaints against institutions that have been routed to the Commission by those agencies.

In the event clear evidence of Title IV fraud and abuse is obtained by the Commission, that information is forwarded to the Department of Education.

Institutions are notified and asked to respond if complaints or allegations of fraud and abuse are communicated to the Commission by the Department of Education.

The Commission submits to the Secretary any proposed changes in policy and procedures, or accreditation standards that might alter its scope of recognition or its compliance with appropriate federal regulation [' 6024.4(g)].

The Commission will not, except where exceptional circumstances exist, renew the accreditation or preaccreditation of any institution that is subject to adverse action by any other recognized institutional accrediting agency or state agency.

REVIEW OF ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

(Adopted June 1996, Revised June 1998, January 1999, June 2001)

The Accrediting Commission conducts systematic and comprehensive study of the utility, effectiveness, relevance, and consistency of its standards and practices.

The Commission assesses its standards concurrent with the development of each edition of the Handbook of Accreditation, normally every six years. Independent review is commissioned prior to issuance of each edition of the Handbook of Accreditation so that the revision may be informed by the findings of that research.

The process for review of accreditation standards:

1. Examines whether the standards are adequate to evaluate educational quality;
2. Focuses on the relationship of the standards to the quality of educational/training programs and their relevance to student needs;
3. Examines each standard and the standards as a whole; and
4. Involves all of the agency's relevant constituencies.

Each such review solicits comments from member institutions and participants in the processes of accreditation. The process seeks to incorporate state of the art institutional evaluation, as practiced by academic quality assurance and accrediting agencies, and by business and industry into standards revisions. Information is sought to measure:

1. Institutional attitudes about validity and utility of standards;
2. Consistency of application of standards;
3. Consistency of application of the Range of Actions policy;
4. Degree of confidence in the processes used by the evaluation teams and the Commission; and
5. Effects of Commission actions and team recommendations on institutional practices.

Constituencies are notified of proposed changes to standards and are given an opportunity to comment. These comments are taken into account during revisions of the standards. If the Commission identifies a need to change the standards between reviews, changes are made in a timely manner. However, the Commission allows sufficient time for the institutions to implement the changes before they are enforced. The process for ensuring constituent participation in those revisions is consistent with that occurring during six-year standard reviews.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY FOR COMMISSIONERS, EVALUATORS, CONSULTANTS, ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF, AND OTHER AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

(Adopted June 1997, Revised June 1999, March 2001)

The Accrediting Commission believes that those who engage in accreditation activities must make every effort to protect the integrity of accrediting processes and outcomes. The intent of the Commission is to:

- maintain the credibility of the accreditation process and confidence in its decisions;
- assure that decisions are made with fairness and impartiality;
- avoid allegations of undue influence; relationships which might bias deliberations, decisions, or actions; and situations which could inhibit an individual=s capacity to make objective decisions;
- make all of its decisions in an atmosphere which avoids even the appearance of conflict of interest;
- provide the means to disclose any existing or apparent conflict of interest.

The Commission will not knowingly invite or assign participation in the evaluation of an institution anyone who has a conflict of interest or the appearance thereof.

General Principles regarding Conflict of Interest

1. The Commission relies on the personal and professional integrity of individuals to guard against conflict of interest, or the appearance of conflict of interest, by refusing any assignment where the potential for conflict of interest exists. Anyone who has contact of the types listed below with an institution/district/system, normally within the last five years, will not participate in the evaluation of that institution.

- any current or prior employment at the institution/district being evaluated;
- candidacy for employment at the institution/district being evaluated;
- any current or prior service as a paid consultant or other business relationship with the institution/district/system being evaluated;
- any written agreement with an institution/district/system that may create a conflict or the appearance of a conflict of interest with the institution/district/system;
- personal or financial interest in the ownership or operation of the institution/district/system;
- close personal or familial relationships with a member of the institution/district;
- other personal or professional connections that would create either a conflict or the appearance of a conflict of interest;
- receipt of any remuneration, honoraria, honorary degrees, honors or other awards from the institution/district/system.

Notwithstanding the above list defining what is considered to be a conflict or potential conflict of interest, a conflict of interest arising from one of the relationships described above does not go into perpetuity, but expires five years after the relationship ends. Nevertheless, the individual is expected to ask him/herself whether the existence of such relationship would in any way interfere with his/her objectivity, and, if the answer is in the affirmative, he/she is expected to refuse the assignment.

2. A Commissioner is expected to recuse him/herself from any deliberation or vote on decisions regarding individual institutions where any of the above conditions exist. A Commissioner who served on the most recent evaluation team of the institution being considered may participate in the discussion, but does not vote. Any such potential conflict of interest shall be reported to the Commission in advance of the deliberation and action and shall be recorded in the Commission minutes.

The following connections have been determined to be of the type that do not constitute a conflict of interest or the appearance thereof. It is recognized that it is the nature of the academy to engender collegial, professional relationships among and between members of institutions. Those professional and collegial relationships are generally considered innocuous. Examples of relationships that do not create a conflict or the appearance of a conflict of interest include:

-attending meetings or cultural events on a campus;
-having infrequent social contact with members of institutions/districts/systems;
-making a presentation at an institution on a one-time, unpaid basis, with no sustained relationship with the institution;
-fulfilling a professional assignment with members of an institution on an issue not related to the institution.

A Commissioner whose connections with the institution/district/system are limited solely to connections of this nature need not disclose them or recuse him/herself.

The purpose of this list is to reduce the burden on the Commission to disclose every relationship for discussion by the Commission. A Commissioner who is uncertain regarding a possible conflict of interest may recuse him/herself, in which case there is no requirement to disclose the nature of the contact(s) for review by the Commission. Alternatively, the Commissioner may disclose the nature of the contact for review by the Commission. The Commission shall then determine in all such cases by majority vote whether the connections raise a conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest. Commission decisions regarding any issue raised relating to conflict of interest shall be noted in the minutes. Commissioners should be especially sensitive to the newly emerging possibilities of conflict of interest created by inter-institutional collaborations such as distance education or international education projects.

3. During the period of Commission employment, Commission staff members are expected to refrain from connections and relationships with candidate or member institutions which could represent a conflict of interest. Commission staff may not engage in private consulting or employment with ACCJC member institutions; Commission staff may engage in such arrangements with outside organizations or institutions other than ACCJC members only with the approval of the Executive Director. The Executive Director may engage in such arrangements only with the approval of the Commission Chair.

4. Each Commissioner, evaluator, consultant, and member of the Commission administrative staff is asked to review the Conflict of Interest Policy and consider potential conflicts of interest in his/her proposed assignments. Institutions being evaluated also review the prospective evaluation team for potential conflict of interest. The Executive Director should be notified immediately if there are conflicts of interest or any concerns that there might be conflicts of interest.

5. During the period in which the visit is occurring and Commission action is pending, evaluation team chairs and team members are expected to refrain from any paid relationship with an institution for which they have been an evaluator.

COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE

(Adopted January 1985, Revised January 1988, January 1992, June 1992)

Commission Membership

Commissioners other than state system representatives are appointed for overlapping three-year terms in accordance with WASC Constitution Article III, Section 3b. Appointments are limited to two three-year terms, unless the person is elected an officer, in which case an additional three-year term may be served. Regular appointments are effective on July 1 of the first year and end on June 30 of the last year of their term.

A Commissioner appointed to a membership category defined by position or status is expected to maintain that status for the entire term. If the Commissioner's position or status changes during a term so that the Commissioner no longer meets the requirement for the category to which appointed, the Commissioner shall notify the Commission's chairperson or Executive Director in a timely manner. A Commissioner whose status has so changed is considered to have completed the term on the date that the new status is actually assumed.

Commission Officers

The officers shall consist of a chairperson and a vice chairperson elected annually by the Commission. The term of office is limited to two years. The vice chairperson shall represent a different constituency from the chairperson and shall serve as chair-elect. Officers shall be elected from Commissioners serving three-year terms.

Conflict of Interest

Commissioners shall absent themselves from the meeting when an institution with which they have any formal relationship is under review.

Commissioners who have participated as a team member in an institutional evaluation may take part in the Commission review but shall not participate in the vote.

APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE

Vacancies Noted

The Executive Director shall inform the Commission at the winter meeting about terms of office due to expire at the end of the following June. In February, a letter will be sent by the Director to chief executive officers, accreditation liaison officers, and district and local academic senate presidents of member institutions, to major organizations, and to individuals known to be interested. The letter shall announce vacant positions on the Commission and will indicate those positions occupied by Commissioners eligible for reappointment. Institutional and organizational representatives may submit nominations, and individuals may also submit applications. The notice will be distributed to organizations for inclusion in their publications. Applications are considered to be in effect for one year.

All applicants and nominees will be asked to submit the following by the published deadline (ordinarily in late April):

1. A letter of application, stating their interest in the Commission.
2. A completed ACCJC data form.
3. Optional - A professional resume and/or letter of recommendation.

Selection Committee

Appointments for terms beginning July 1

The Selection Committee, established pursuant to Section 3b of the WASC Constitution, shall meet to consider nominees and applicants and to make appointments to the Commission.

The chairperson of the Commission shall designate a member of the Selection Committee to serve as its chair.

The Executive Director shall serve as the nonvoting secretary of the Selection Committee.

Appointments Out of Normal Sequence

If a vacancy occurs after the meeting of the Selection Committee and before the winter Commission meeting, the Selection Committee will review the pool of applicants and nominations. If the Selection Committee determines that there is adequate representativeness in the pool, it will proceed with the appointments. If it determines that the pool is not adequate, the vacancy will be announced according to the process describe above.

PART IV

APPENDIX

ACCREDITATION AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

1. Western Association of Schools and Colleges*

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is one of six regional accrediting associations that cover the United States, whose purpose is continual improvement of education and cooperation among educational institutions and agencies.

WASC was formed July 1, 1962, for the purpose of evaluation and accreditation of schools, colleges, and universities in California, Hawaii, and Pacific Island areas.

WASC functions through a board of directors and three accrediting commissions. The board of directors consists of nine members, three of whom are elected by each of the WASC commissions. The board annually elects one of its members to be chairperson of the board and president of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. It also elects a secretary-treasurer, who is usually the executive director of one of the three accrediting commissions.

The board of directors and the secretary-treasurer are responsible for the annual publication of the WASC Directory, which lists WASC-accredited and candidate institutions.

Each commission develops its own standards, procedures, and fiscal policies, under the authority of and subject to the approval of the WASC Board of Directors.

Those institutions which have been evaluated by commissions and have received approval are accredited by WASC. Any such accreditation shall cease whenever an institution is dropped from the accredited list of the association, or fails to pay its annual fees, or requests in writing that its accreditation be terminated.

The WASC office is located at 533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 200, Burlingame, CA 94010. Telephone (415) 344-4805, FAX (415) 375-7790. The WASC office is administrated by Donald G. Haught, Secretary-Treasurer.

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*For the list of WASC candidate and accredited institutions, see the official WASC Directory.

The three accrediting commissions of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges are:

a. Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities

Ralph A. Wolff is the Executive Director, and the Commission office is located at 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, California 94501. The telephone number is (510) 748-9001.

b. Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

Barbara A. Beno is the Executive Director, and the Commission office is located at 3402 Mendocino Ave Santa Rosa CA 95403. The telephone number is (707) 569-9177.

c. Accrediting Commission for Schools

Donald G. Haught is the Executive Director. The Commission office is at 533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 200, Burlingame, California 94010. The telephone number is (415) 696-1060.

2. Other Regional Commissions in the United States

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Higher Education, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104. Telephone (215) 662-5606. Executive Director, Jean Avnet Morse.

New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, Charles M. Cook, Director; Commission on Vocational, Technical, Career Institutions, Richard E. Mandeville, Director, 209 Burlington Road, Bedford, Massachusetts 01730. Telephone (617) 271-0022.

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, 30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, Illinois 60602. Telephone (312) 263-0456, (800) 621-7440. Executive Director, Patricia A. Thrash.

Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Colleges,
8060 165th Avenue, NE, Suite 100, Redmond, Washington 98052
Telephone (425) 558-4224. Executive Director, Sandra Elman.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges, 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033. Telephone (404) 679-4500. Executive Director, James T. Rogers.

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES CONSTITUTION

Revised July 2002

ARTICLE I. Name and Purpose

This organization shall be entitled WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES. Its purpose is to promote the welfare, interests, and development of elementary, secondary, and higher education through (1) improvement of educational programs, (2) close cooperation among the schools, colleges, and universities within the territory it undertakes to serve, (3) certification of accreditation or candidacy status, and (4) effective working relationships with other educational organizations and accrediting agencies.

ARTICLE II. Accrediting Region and Certification

Section 1. The accrediting region of the Association consists of the states of California and Hawaii, the territories of Guam, American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Pacific Basin, and East Asia, and areas of the Pacific and East Asia where American/ International schools or colleges may apply, and such other areas as may apply to it for service, subject to approval by the Board of Directors.

Section 2. Any university, college, or school shall be certified by the Board of Directors as a candidate or accredited institution upon report of action taken by the appropriate Accrediting Commission. Any such certification shall cease whenever an institution resigns, is dropped from the accredited or candidate list of the Association, or fails to pay its annual fees by the date set by the appropriate Accrediting Commission for payment.

ARTICLE III. Organization

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall consist of nine persons, three to be selected for staggered three-year terms from and by each of the three Accrediting Commissions hereinafter named and described. One of each Commission's appointees shall be its Chair or Assistant/Vice Chair. The Board shall elect its Chair from among its members for a one-year term. The Chair may be re-elected for one additional one-year term. The Chair of the Board shall be the President of the Association. The Secretary-Treasurer of the Association shall be selected by the Board.

Section 2. The Board of Directors shall meet annually at such time as may be determined by the Board, and may hold other meetings at the call of the Chair or on the request of any three members of the Board of Directors.

Section 3. There shall be three Accrediting Commissions, as follows:

a. *Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities.*

This Commission shall consist of up to twenty-five (25) members, but no less than eighteen (18) members, with the exact number set by the Commission from time to time. Commission members shall serve overlapping three-(3-)year terms, with a maximum of two terms (plus any partial term served as the result of the member being selected to fill a vacancy), as established by the Commission. The Commission shall elect one of its members to serve as Chair for a three-(3-)year term and one of its members to serve as Vice Chair for a one-(1-)year term. In the event the has served for the maximum two terms on the Commission prior to the expiration of his or her term as Chair, the Chair shall continue to serve on the Commission until his or her term as Chair shall have expired. Commission members shall be elected by the presidents of the institutions accredited by the Commission according to Bylaws approved by the Commission.

Members of the Commission shall be allowed to complete their terms upon retirement from their institutions. Nonpublic Commissioners who lose their institutional base for any reason shall be ineligible to serve beyond the end of the academic year.

b. *Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges.*

This Commission shall consist of nineteen members, all of whom are appointed by the Commissioner Selection Committee. One Commission member shall be selected from among the nominees who represent community college interests provided by the chief administrative officer of each of the following: the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the University of Hawaii Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. In addition, one Commission member shall be selected from among the nominees provided by each of the other Commissions to represent the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities and the Accrediting Commission for Schools. These nominees shall be sitting or former members of the Senior College or Schools Commissions, or individuals with demonstrated familiarity with the policies, procedures, and operations of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. At least five of the Commission members shall be faculty, at least five members shall represent the public interest [as defined in USDOE §602.3], at least three members shall be administrators, at least one member shall represent independent institutions, and at least one member shall represent institutions in the Western Pacific. Commission representatives shall serve staggered three year terms.

Commission officers shall be selected by the Commission according to Bylaws approved by the Commission.

c. *Accrediting Commission for Schools*

This Commission shall consist of up to twenty-six persons selected by the Commission's Nomination Review Committee from candidates nominated by member organizations or the Commission. Not less than one-seventh of the persons selected shall be public members. Appointment shall be for staggered three-year terms. Representatives shall be nominated as follows:

- seven by the Association of California School Administrators;
- one by the California Teachers' Association;
- one by the California Federation of Teachers;
- one by the Hawaii Government Employees' Association;
- one by the California Association of Independent Schools;
- one by the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools;
- one by the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools;
- three by the Western Catholic Educational Association, one of whom must be a practicing classroom teacher;
- one by the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists;
- one practicing classroom teacher on a rotational basis from the Hawaii public and private schools;
- one practicing classroom teacher from the California Association of Private School Organizations (CAPSO);
- one school board member by the California School Boards' Association;
- one parent by the California Congress of Parents and Teachers;
- non-school public members from business, community, or public organizations.

The California Department of Education and the Hawaii Department of Education will each have an ex officio seat on the Commission. The Commission shall determine which organizations shall be represented by voting Commission members, and which shall be represented by non-voting ex officio members.

If a change of status, which affects eligibility for constituency appointments of any of the above appointees occurs during the term of office, the individual may at the discretion of the appointing agency, serve the remainder of the term or may be replaced. A person completing a term after a change of status may not be reappointed.

Section 4. The Executive Director of each Accrediting Commission shall be appointed by the Commission. Changes in the size and composition of each Accrediting Commission may be made by the Commission with the approval of the Board of Directors. The composition of each Accrediting Commission shall be published in the annual Directory of the Association.

Section 5. Recognizing that the Board of Directors retains ultimate authority over administrative structures, budgets, fiscal policies, contracts and leases, including those entered into by the Accrediting Commissions, the Board will delegate actual management over such matters, including the actual review and approval of such matters, to the Commissions to the extent it deems prudent.

Section 6. Action taken by any Commission to deny or withdraw accreditation or candidacy shall be reported in writing to the WASC Board at it annual meeting.

ARTICLE IV. Criteria for Certification

Section 1. Each of the Accrediting Commissions shall adopt its own criteria, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors of the Association. The criteria shall provide for the evaluation of each institution on the basis of the degree to which it is accomplishing the purposes and functions outlined in its own statement of objectives, and on the appropriateness of those purposes and functions for an institution of its type.

Section 2. The actions by each Accrediting Commission, subject to its review procedures and the appeals procedures provided for in Article VI, shall be final and shall be certified by the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE V. Duties of Officers

Section 1. The Chair of the Board of Directors shall preside at all meetings of the Board and shall have the right to vote on all issues that come before the Board for decision. As President of the Association, he/she shall be the official spokesperson for the Association, representing the Association in accord with policies established by each of the three Accrediting Commissions and the Board.

Section 2. The Secretary-Treasurer shall serve as the Secretary of the Board of Directors and shall maintain a complete file of Minutes and Board decisions. He/She shall receive from the Directors of the three Accrediting Commissions the lists of accredited and candidate institutions and shall provide for the publication of a total Association list of accredited and candidate institutions at least once each year.

Section 3. The Director of each of the three Accrediting Commissions shall maintain a careful record of the actions and decisions of the Commission, shall be responsible under the Commission's direction for the scheduling of accreditation visits, appointment of visiting committees, distribution of necessary accreditation materials, and for such other matters as the Commission may delegate to the Director for the effective administration of the accreditation program. Following each meeting of the Commission at which accreditation decisions are made, the Director shall promptly notify the Secretary-Treasurer of the Board of Directors of all changes in the list of accredited and candidate institutions. At its annual meeting the Board of Directors shall certify the list of accredited and candidate institutions submitted by each Accrediting Commission.

ARTICLE VI. Appeals

Section 1. The WASC Board of Directors shall elect annually a WASC Hearing Panel from which shall be selected a Hearing Board established for the purpose of deciding appeals by any institution against the decision of any of the WASC Commissions denying or withdrawing accreditation or candidacy. This Panel shall consist of twenty persons as follows: (1) five from elementary/secondary schools; (2) five from junior or community colleges; (3) five from senior colleges and universities; and (4) five lay members of governing boards. None of the twenty shall be a current member of an Accrediting Commission.

a. The Hearing Board shall consist of five persons, including at least one person from each of the above categories, selected on random basis from the Hearing Panel and appointed, after such selection, by the WASC President. None of those selected shall have been involved in the accreditation process which resulted in the appeal. The Hearing Board shall elect its Chair from its own membership. Each member, including the Chair, shall have one vote.

b. Hearing Board members to replace those who are absent or have a conflict of interest shall be selected on the same random basis and appointed by the WASC President from the remaining members of the Hearing Panel.

Section 2. Costs. An institution making an appeal shall assume all necessary costs of the Hearing Board including the cost of any legal fees of the Hearing Board.

a. The WASC Board of Directors shall establish a differential deposit, depending upon whether the institution chooses to be represented by counsel in the conduct of the hearing. At the time it makes its appeal the institution shall declare whether or not it wishes to have an attorney conduct its portion of the hearing and represent it before the Hearing Board.

b. An institution making an appeal shall deposit at the time it files its appeal an amount to be established annually by the WASC Board of Directors [ten thousand dollars ($10,000)] with the Secretary Treasurer of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges if the institution wishes to conduct the hearing without the use of an attorney to represent it. If the institution wishes to have an attorney conduct its portion of the hearing and represent it before the Hearing Board the deposit shall be twenty-five thousand dollars ($25,000).

c. In the event the necessary costs exceed the amount of the deposit, the institution shall be responsible for the balance or, in the event the deposit exceeds the necessary costs, the institution shall receive a refund in the amount of the difference.

Section 3. If an institution after availing itself of any review or appeal procedures of its appropriate Commission, still believes itself aggrieved by that Commission's denial or termination of candidacy or accreditation, its governing board may appeal such action within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of notice thereof to the President of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges through the appropriate Commission's Executive Director. During the period up to and including the appeal, the institution's status with the Commission shall remain the same as it was prior to the decision being appealed.

a. The President of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges shall then arrange a hearing at the earliest practicable date for the representatives of the institution before the Association's Hearing Board, established for this purpose as prescribed in Article VI, Section I of this Constitution.

b. This hearing shall be informal and conducted under rules and procedures established by the WASC Board of Directors. Those testifying shall not be placed under oath. Legal counsel may be present as advisors but they shall not conduct the case unless the institution has filed a declaration at the time it filed its appeal, as provided in Article VI, Section 2, of this Constitution.

c. At least forty-five (45) calendar days before the time set for the hearing of such an appeal, the President (or Secretary-Treasurer) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges shall cause notice of the time and place of the hearing to be mailed by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the Chairman or President of the Governing Board of the institution with a copy to the chief executive. Proof of notice shall be made at the hearing.

d. Subject to limitations set forth below, representatives of the institution shall have an opportunity to present written documents, other evidence on the institution's behalf, oral testimony, and arguments. Representatives of the appropriate Commission and of the evaluation team shall have a similar opportunity to present evidence, oral testimony, and arguments on the Commission's behalf. Neither party shall have the right to subpoena or to call any witnesses from the other party.

e. The Hearing Board, in addition to considering evidence adduced at the hearing, will also consider the institution's self-study report, the evaluation team report, and all other material relied upon by the Commission in reaching the decision which is being appealed, including the reports filed as a result of any internal Commission appeal process.

f. The appeal shall be based on one or more of the following grounds: (1) there were errors or omissions in carrying out prescribed procedures on the part of the evaluation team and/or the Commission which materially affected the Commission's decision; (2) there was demonstrable bias or prejudice on the part of one or more members.

ARTICLE VII. Financing

Financial support for the work of the Board of Directors of the Association shall be obtained by equal assessment on each of the three Accrediting Commissions.

ARTICLE VIII. Amendments

Proposed amendments to this Constitution may originate with any of the Commissions or with the Board of Directors. Such proposed amendments, except those relating to the size and composition of a Commission (See Article III, Section 4), shall become effective upon approval by a two-thirds vote of each of the three Commissions and of the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE IX. Indemnification

The Association does hereby grant indemnification to any officer, director, commissioner, or other agent, or former officer, director, commissioner, or other agent, including but not limited to WASC employees and team members, for claims or actions asserted against said person arising out of acts or omissions alleged to have occurred in connection with, or as a result of his or her activities as an officer, director, commissioner, or agent, of this Association, to the fullest extent permitted by law; provided, however, as follows:

a. If any claim or action is asserted or threatened to be asserted, as described in such statutes, the person requesting indemnification must give timely notice thereof to the President of the Association or the Chairperson of the Board of Directors;

b. If the person requesting indemnification is not successful on the merits of the action, the Board of Directors, the members, or the court must determine that the person acted in good faith, in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in the best interests of the corporation, and without reason to believe his or her conduct was unlawful; and

c. Indemnification shall be provided herein only to the extent that valid and collectible insurance coverage under all existing policies of insurance held by the Association has been exhausted.

PROCEDURES AND INTERNAL POLICIES

I. Oversight by the WASC Board Over Commission Activities

Recognizing that the WASC Board of Directors (the "Board") retains the ultimate responsibility for the affairs of the corporation while at the same time recognizing the wide latitude which has been historically granted to the three Commissions, the Board establishes the following rules with respect to its oversight responsibilities. These rules are not intended to preclude the Board from taking further actions as it deems necessary in a particular instance to discharge its responsibility to govern the affairs of the corporation:

1. Each Commission shall be audited annually by an outside certified public accountant of the Commission's choice. Copies of the full audit report, including any "management letter" shall be provided by each Commission to the Board.

2. Each Commission shall annually develop and adopt an operating and, when necessary, capital budget. The budgets shall be reported to, reviewed by, and ratified by the WASC Board. Prior ratification shall not be necessary in order for a Commission to begin to implement its budget. Significant variances in expenses or revenues from the budget shall also be reported to the Board.

3. All Commission Manuals, Handbooks, Policies and amendments thereto shall be presented to the Board by the respective Commission for ratification. Prior ratification shall not be necessary in order for a Commission to begin to implement any policy, Manual, or Handbook.

4. Each Commission shall present for prior approval of 'the WASC Board any proposed capital expenditure larger than the reserves of that Commission.

II. Meeting by Conference Call

A special meeting of the Board may be requested for any reason by the chairs of at least two (2) of the Commissions of WASC. The Board may also meet and act by a meeting conducted by conference call.

III. Satisfying Extraordinary Litigation Expense

WASC recognizes the possibility that the organization may at some time in the future incur substantial costs rising from litigation against WASC. Such costs might involve substantial legal defense expenses or an adverse judgment with resulting damages, or both. WASC maintains liability insurance to protect WASC and its Commissions from such a possibility. However, defense costs might be incurred or an adverse judgment might occur which would not be covered by insurance. This might occur if: (1) insurance becomes unavailable in the future; (2) the adverse judgment or defense costs are in excess of insurance limits; or (3) the nature of the liability precludes coverage from the insurance policy. In such an instance, WASC would have to depend on its own internal financial resources to satisfy all or part of the defense costs or judgment. The purpose of this Policy is to set forth the manner in which the assets of WASC and its Commissions would be made available in this event.

1. The Commission responsible for the action giving rise to the litigation would be responsible to pay for all costs of defense, including legal expenses, and to satisfy the judgment through whatever means it might have at its disposal;

2. To the extent that the assets of the affected Commission were insufficient to satisfy the Commission's obligation under paragraph I above, the assets of the remaining Commissions would be available on an equal basis to cover these costs. To the extent that the assets of the three Commissions were insufficient to pay for these costs, any assets controlled by the WASC Board would become available.

3. To the extent that the assets of the Commissions not responsible for the adverse decision or of the WASC Board were employed as described of WASC's insurance in paragraph 2 above, the Commission responsible for the adverse judgment would be responsible to reimburse the other Commissions and the WASC Board for all such costs. Such reimbursement will be made as soon as practicable and according to a schedule developed by the Commissions and approved by the WASC Board.

IV. Term of the Chair of the Board

At its annual meeting, the Board shall elect its Chair from among its members for a one-year term. The Chair may be re-elected for one additional one-year term. The Chair's term will run from August 1 to July 31.

U.S. Department of Education
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